Chaldeo-Indian Liturgy 3

MYSTERIES OF THE CHURCH

(Sacraments and Sacramentals)

VARGHESE PATHIKULANGARA

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VARGHESE PATHIKULANGARA

MYSTERIES OF THE CHURCH

(Sacraments and Sacramentals)

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Mysteries of the Church

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(Chaldeo-Indian Liturgy 3)

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To
The fond remembrance of
Our beloved collaborator
Rev. Prof. Dr Wilson Ukken
(13.10.1944 – 14.5.2003)

East Syriac
Or
Chaldeo-Indian Liturgy
In
Four volumes

Chaldeo-Indian Liturgy 1 : Introduction to Liturgy

Chaldeo-Indian Liturgy 2 : *Qurbana*, the Eucharistic Celebration

Chaldeo-Indian Liturgy 3 : Mysteries of the Church (Sacraments and Sacramentals)

Chaldeo-Indian Liturgy 4 : Divine Praises and Liturgical Year

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PREFACE

The salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit by the risen Lord from the Father create the situation in which God's abiding presence is promised and shared in and through the word and the holy symbols of the Church. The unique mediation of Jesus does not exclude other mediations. His mediation constitutes the immediacy of the presence of God in the most radical sense possible in history. But it is exercised through believers in their communication with one another and with those out side the community of faith. St Paul takes for granted the mediations of this sort (2 *Cor* 5: 19-20). In fact, they are the preconditions for the possibility of Christ's continued mediation from God to humanity in history. However, these mediations are made possible only by the Spirit of Christ, who awakens the obedience of faith by which believers are enabled to accept Christ as Saviour and witness to him, and by which others can discern Christ's saving presence in this witness.

The saving events take place more generally in special moments of human existence, in which the meaning and non-meaning of life comes into play, where human existence is condensed and symbolically referred beyond itself. Such events reach a high point when one responds to the human situation in accord with the interpretation given to it by the word of God in Jesus Christ. These are, in fact, the Mysteries of the Church or the Sacraments and Sacramentals.

Sacramental celebrations symbolically represent human situations and make them, through the word of God, into situations of salvation, times of grace and signs of God's grace for the subjects. The Mysteries or Sacraments and Sacramentals, as activities of the community of faith, symbolize the transcendent presence of God in particular situations of life. They consist in the celebration of human and social situations, symbolically represented and proclaimed to be filled with the saving presence of God, who makes concrete claims on the participants.

The external aspect of the sacramental celebrations consists in verbal formulas and symbolical actions, which sometimes include the use of material elements such as water, oil, bread and wine. The persons involved in the celebration are the Triune God, Father, risen Lord and Holy Spirit, along with the assembled community of faith. The Father is the ultimate source of the celebration; Christ acts as Head of the community, as the chief celebrant; the Holy Spirit vivifies the community so that it may engage itself in this dialogue of love. The assembled faithful have different roles to play. There is the ordained minister who presides, the subject in whose favour the celebration takes place, and the community as a whole. All of these persons have functions that contribute to the realization of the sacramental celebration.

The ideal realization of the sacramental celebration occurs only when all the believers who are present actively engage their faith; for all forms of the earthly liturgy are sacramental realizations of the heavenly liturgy, and reach their full stature only when each of the participants is turned to all the others, as far as possible, in the openness of love.

The present volume is the third in a series of four volumes, hinted in my earlier book, *Indo-Chaldian Liturgy*: (Kottayam 1979) and proposed clearly in the book, *Divine Praises and Liturgical Year*, Chaldeo-Indian Liturgy 4 (Kottayam 2000). In four volumes I had contemplated a comprehensive discussion of the East Syriac or Chaldeo-Indian Liturgy.

In seven chapters this book gives in summary a discussion of the Mysteries of the Church, the Sacraments and Sacramentals, with special emphasis to the characteristic traits of the Chaldaic and Syro-Malabar liturgical traditions.

Before concluding this introductory note, I would like to express my most sincere thanks to Rev. Sebastian Thekkedam CMI and Rev. Thomas Chempilparampil CMI who have spent much of their precious time to read through the manuscript and make the necessary language corrections. Many thanks also to Rev. Jeneesh Chullickaran CMI who did the DTP work and to all those who have helped me in one way or other to publish this work.

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January 06, 2004
The Great Feast of *Denha*.

Chapter 1

THE MYSTERIES OF FAITH

The early Church advocated an understanding of the Mysteries or the Sacraments as revealing much about God's love in creation, His intimacy with humanity and His own nature. The Western Church, in the course of time, influenced by Augustinianism and other forces defined Sacrament as "an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace". In this case the grace was conceived as a non-personal substance rather than a direct and intimate communion of God with the believer.

The Word *Sacramentum*

"The word Sacrament is found nowhere in the Scriptures. The Latin term *sacramentum*, meaning, "to make holy", was a legal term belonging to the language of Roman jurisprudence. It referred to the oath taken by a Roman soldier upon his enlistment in the army, (a pledge to set himself apart for this service). Given this backdrop, Tertullian (160-225) applied the word to Baptism, asserting that each Christian's reception of the rite thus enlisted him in Christ's army. From that time on, sacramentum, or sacrament, was applied in the Church of the West to other rites believed to have been instituted by Christ"[1].

The term *sacramentum* was also used in the Roman world "to refer to money deposited in a lawsuit by both

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[1] J.Bajis, *Common Ground*, An Introduction to Eastern Christianity for the American Christian, Minneapolis 1991, p. 170

parties. The party who lost the suit forfeited the money to sacred purposes"[2]. The word sacrament was already associated with Christian worship services by the time of Pliny (ca.112). He speaks of Christians binding themselves with an "oath" in the pattern of Roman military usage.

Mysterion, Raza, Mystery

When the Church in the West gave almost total commitment to the term sacrament, the Greek Churches were employing the term *mysterion* (mystery) which had a deeper meaning than sacrament. "In the Synoptics *mysterion* refers to "the secrets of the kingdom of heaven" (*Mt* 13:11, *Mk* 4:11, *Lk* 8:10) which Jesus reveals through parables. In St.Paul's writings *mysterion* often refers to Christ (1 *Cor* 2:7-10, *Rom* 16:25-26, *Col* 1:26-27, 4:3, *Eph* 1:9-10, 3:3-12, 1 *Tim* 3:16) who reveals the divine will to save all people, who himself is the mystery through whom all things are restored, and who dwells in those who believe. Christ crucified is the supreme manifestation of God's wisdom (1 *Cor* 2:1f., *Col* 2:2). While the rites of baptism and eucharist are known in the NT era (*Acts* 2:41, 1 *Cor* 11:17-34) and their usage is reflected in NT texts (e.g., as background in the Last Supper accounts or *John* 6), neither of them is called a sacrament at this time"[3]

"It is called a mystery", writes St. Chrysostom, "because what we believe is not the same as what we see, but we see one thing and believe another"[4].

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[2] P.J.Achtemeier, (ed.), *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, Bangalore 1990, p. 890

[3] K.W.Irwin, "Sacrament" in J.A.Komonchak-M.Collins-D.A.Lane, (eds.), *The New Dictionary of Theology*, Bangalore 1993, pp.910-911

[4] PG 61,55

"The word (*mysterion*) appears in the Scriptures[5] and signifies God's entire scheme of redemption – the new creation of all through the life, death, resurrection, and glorification of Christ. From the Eastern Christian point of view, the *mysteries* of the faith ("sacraments") reflect the whole *Mystery* of what it means to be in Christ"[6].

The Syriac Churches are using a similar term in Syriac *Raza*, meaning mystery. *Raza* in the singular signifies any one of the sacraments. In the plural, *Raze*, it signifies either sacraments in general or the Eucharistic mysteries. Among the Syro-Malabarians, *Raza*, the singular form indicates also the most Solemn form of the Eucharistic celebration, while among the non-Catholic Thomas Christians of India, namely, the Jacobites and Marthomites, it indicates the church procession. *Onitha d-Raze*, or simply the *D-Raze*, signifies the 'Anthem of the Mysteries', the anthem which is sung during the transference of the Eucharistic Gifts from *Bet-Gazze*, the treasure-houses to *Madbaha*, the altar.

Jesus, the *Ursakrament*

Jesus Christ Himself is the true and ultimate Sacrament of our Salvation. He is the *Ursakrament* or the primordial Sacrament. Everything that reveals Him is "sacramental". As the Church, His Body, brings us into the deepest union with Him, she is considered to be the chief of sacraments or the fundamental sacrament. All other

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[5] *Mk* 4:11, *Rom* 16:25, 1 *Cor* 2:7, 15:51, *Eph* 1:9, 3:4-9, 5:32, 6:19, *Col* 1:26-27, 2:2, 4:3, 1 *Tim* 3:16, *Rev* 10:7

[6] J.Bajis, *Common Ground*, p. 170

sacraments work in the Church and as the Church. Every work done in faith with the help of the Holy Spirit is in fact truly sacramental. Because of this perspective, the Eastern Churches are not very happy with the clear distinction made in the Latin Church between sacraments and sacramentals. Of course, the Catholic Eastern Churches accept this distinction between the sacraments and sacramentals. At the same time they prefer to call them as greater and lesser mysteries.

Number of the Sacraments

"In early Christian language, 'mysterion' was applied to any sacred object, in fact to anything which as 'mirror' or 'form' of the Divine was regarded as revealing the Divine. The number of 'mysteries' is therefore potentially limitless, for everything in the cosmos in some manner mirrors or informs the Divine and is thus a 'mysterion'"[7].

In the early Church there was no special concern about the precise number of the sacraments. They lived by them and through their marvellous powers. Their concern was to prepare and to instruct the faithful as to how to receive them with much spiritual benefit as possible. Even up to the 12th century it appears that there was no restriction in the number of the sacraments in the Latin tradition. In the 12th century Hugo of St. Victor listed some thirty sacraments. Any way it appears that all Christian traditions were celebrating seven Mysteries as the important ones. In the Latin tradition the number of sacraments was fixed as seven only in the Council of Trent in 1545. The early East Syriac or Chaldeo-Indian tradition appears to have substituted the

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[7] A.J.Philippou, (ed.), *The Orthodox Ethos*, Oxford 1964, p. 133

Sign of the Cross and the Holy Ferment in the place of Matrimony and Anointing of the Sick as greater mysteries[8].

Sacrament, Personal Communion with God

Christ is the primordial Sacrament, the Sacrament which makes all sacraments possible. The various sacraments are celebration of our faith, our total commitment to Jesus Christ, during the critical or decisive moments of our life. Christ is to us the same person with whom we are united in all the sacraments. The so-called sacramental grace is the direct and personal communion of God with His people in Jesus Christ. Let us not think about grace as *something* created by God in order to save us. Grace is in fact the work of the Holy Spirit in us relating us both to the Father and to the Son. "The Holy Spirit who rests like a royal unction upon the humanity of the Son, Head of the Church, communicating himself to each member of this body, creates so to speak many Christs, many of the Lord's anointed: persons in the way of deification by the side of the divine Person"[9]. An Eastern Christian faithful understands grace and salvation only in terms of a personal relationship with God.

To know God intimately and to be 'God-like' is not contrary to man's nature. Man is quite at home with his Creator and Father. This at-home feeling is brought about by Jesus Christ the 'God-man' and it happens in the Church by the work of the Holy Spirit.

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[8] G.P.Badger, *Nestorians and their Rituals*, London 1852, pp. 150-151

[9] V.Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, Cambridge and London 1973, p. 174.

Sacrament, a Communitarian Act

If the celebration of the Sacrament is a personal communion with God in the Church, it has to be necessarily communitarian. Every Sacrament, therefore, is a community celebration. God Himself is a communion of three Persons and the Church consists of a large community of faithful. Hence the personal relationship with God and the brethren in the Church is an essential factor of every sacramental celebration.

> The Church in which God reveals himself constitutes, in some way, the sacrament from which the individual sacraments are derived. According to can. 673, the celebration of the sacraments is an action of the Church, that is, of the assembly of all the members of the people of God, of the Body of Christ "joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with the proper functioning of each part" (*Eph* 4:16). This entails an active participation in the celebration by all the faithful. It is important that this participation of all the members of the people of God in the dynamic of the celebration be accomplished and manifested always in the celebration of the sacraments, which are the culminating actions of the life of the Church[10].

Sacraments, Not Machines of Salvation

It is to be affirmed at the same time that "the Christian's participation in the sacraments does not

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[10] Congregation for the Eastern Churches, *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, Vatican 1996, n.40

automatically guarantee him an increased realization of fellowship with the Trinity and his brethren. Each believer can experience the communion of God in the mysteries, but what he does with this Presence, and how it changes him, is up to his own personal co-operation with the Spirit of God throughout his Christian life"[11].

The sacraments never work mechanically. The co-operation of the recipient, direct or indirect, is always needed. "The sacraments are not the 'machines of salvation', or magical contacts that work automatically; they are personal encounters with Christ in faith"[12]. The Eastern Churches always lay stress on the divine presence and power in the sacraments in order to eliminate the risk of regarding the outward signs in any mechanical or magical sense.

Matter is Good

Since both matter and spirit are created by God, they are interrelated and integral for our salvation. We can never consider matter as base and evil. It is through matter that we are to reach the spiritual. The whole human salvation is worked out by the Son through His contact with the matter. "Man possessed the earth because God gave it to him. It was the original sacrament, for it was this means by which man encountered God, his Creator, and it would have always been so, had man used it as God intended"[13].

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[11] J.Bajis, *Common Ground*, p. 174
[12] A.M.Coniaris, *These are the Sacraments*, Minneapolis 1981, p. 15
[13] Bishop Dmitri, *Orthodox Christian Teaching*, New York 1983, p. 26

Creation, Redeemed in man

The whole creation is to be redeemed in man (*Rom* 5:17-21). We are called to offer ourselves and the whole creation to God. It is in this offering that all matter acquires its spiritual meaning and is blessed. "To the universe, man is the hope of receiving grace and unity with God, and also the danger of failure and fallenness. 'Creation anxiously awaits this revelation of the sons of God', writes St. Paul. 'It is indeed to vanity that creation was made subject, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it; with, however, the hope that creation would also be liberated from the slavery of corruption to participate in the glorious liberty of the children of God' (*Rom* 8:19-21). Subjected to disorder and death by man, creation also attends upon man, become sons of God through grace, for its liberation. The world follows man, since it is like him in nature: "the anthroposphere", one could say"[14].

"...the Resurrection of Christ, by breaking the laws of nature, has liberated man from slavery to nature, and he is called to realize his destiny as lord of nature in God's name"[15].

> The mysteries of Christ are communicated to us through visible signs. The sacraments are, therefore, the place in which created things are assumed in order to give thanks to God and thus reach the fullness of their meaning. The economy of divine grace dispensed to mankind is accomplished by deeds and words (cf. *Acts* 1:1), increasing the value of the

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[14] V.Lossky, *Orthodox Theology, An Introduction*, Crestwood 1978, p. 71
[15] J.Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, New York 1979, pp. 135-136

"cosmic elements": the human body above all; then water, oil, bread, and wine; the instruments such as the Eucharistic cup; the sacred building with all that it represents and encloses within it, especially the cross and the holy icons; sacred places and times. Such elements are taken up by the Lord Jesus through the Holy Spirit, recapitulated by him and entrusted to the Church as instruments of salvific sacramentality. In fact, the grace of the Holy Spirit makes use of these for the redemption and sanctification of mankind and the cosmos (cf. *Rom* 8: 16-25) and for rendering the Father worship that is worthy. It is in this context that the liturgical gestures and benedictions acquire all their meaning. In the theology of the liturgy, and thus in the mystagogy of the people, all these are necessarily important material for reflection and explanation[16].

Instituted by Christ

All the sacraments are considered to be instituted by Christ. "The sacraments are of divine institution if only because Jesus Christ has founded the Church, by his theandric life, cross and resurrection and by his explicit will to found it, as the representative presence of his eschatologically victorious salvation, and because the sacraments are absolute acts of his victorious presence of grace for the individual in his decisive situations. In addition, though this need not be thought necessary for every sacrament, we know from historical tradition the words by which Christ instituted baptism (*Mt* 28:19), the Eucharist (*Mt* 26:26-28, *Mk* 14:22-24, *Lk* 22:19-20, 1 *Cor* 11:24f.), the

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[16] *Instruction*, n. 41

sacrament of penance (*Mt* 16:18f., *Jn* 20:22f.) and (as to office itself) holy orders (power of keys, binding and loosing). By the nature of such social events, it is for the Church to fix the concrete details of valid rite or the several degrees of participation in a sacramental action"[17].

Decisive Role of the Church

Signs and symbols are the only means through which one can reach the salvation accomplished in history by Jesus Christ. As we have already mentioned, each individual cannot plan and design the signs and symbols for himself, since the way to salvation is open to humanity as a community and not as individuals. God could have planned it in such a way that each individual attains it by himself/herself. But what he has opened is the way of individual salvation through the community, the Church. That appears to be the optimum style for man, who is a social being. Hence the Church alone, in the power of the Holy Spirit, can determine, explain and when needed change the signs and symbols in Christian life and worship. The faithful, individually or in community, can propose them, but the power to determine them rests exclusively in the teaching authority of the Church.

The age-old principle *lex orandi lex credendi* always holds good in the case of the sacraments, revealing the mind of the Church through the various rites and ceremonies. "All are important in the sense that even the minutest action or word is a vehicle of the Holy Spirit, part of the "mystery", making Christ present and acting on the souls of men. This

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[17] K.Rahner-H.Vorgrimler, *Concise Theological Dictionary*, London 1965, p, 416

alone inspires awe for the smallest word. Whatever has been determined and added or changed by the Church in the administration of the sacraments ought to be carefully and reverently performed"[18]. "Like diamonds and pearls, its (Liturgy's) every part is precious, because even the smallest iota is a vehicle of the Holy Spirit"[19].

Signs and Symbols in Christian Life

Everything in Christian life and in the worship of the Church works through signs and symbols. We use there the material realities to contact the spiritual realities. The words, gestures, movements, things, art, persons, places, are all signs and symbols in Christian life and worship. They are holy signs – symbols that unite God and man – signs that bring together heaven and earth. As St. Augustine wrote years ago, "in liturgy we see one thing and understand another"[20].

Faith an Essential Condition

The haemorrhaging woman touching the fringe of Jesus' cloak (*Mk* 5:27) is a very good example. There was a great crowd following Jesus and thronging about Him. The people were pressing around Jesus. But power has gone forth from Jesus only to this one woman. Why ? Because she alone touched Him with faith. Thus faith shows itself to be an essential condition for the working of signs and symbols.

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[18] C.Kucharek, *The Sacramental Mysteries, A Byzantine Approach*, Ontario 1976, p. 353
[19] C.Kucharek, *The Sacramental Mysteries*, p. 354
[20] Sermon 272

How Symbols Work

In the case of sacraments, it is commonly said, what is signified becomes a reality there. E.g., washing with water in baptism is not merely "signifying" the inner purification, but actually effecting it; when it is said that the bread and wine in the eucharistic celebration are the symbols of the body and blood of Jesus, all mean that they are really so.

Not only the signs and symbols in the seven Sacraments but all signs and symbols recognised by the Church and used in Christian life and worship lead the faithful to the corresponding realities: theologically speaking, the sign and the signified become one reality. The concept and theology of *realsymbol* in Karl Rahner is almost equivalent to this understanding. According to Rahner, the Logos is the *realsymbol* of God, 'Logos incarnated' the *realsymbol* of Logos, the Church of 'Logos incarnated', and Sacraments of the Church. Here again Rahner applies the concept of *realsymbol* only to the seven Sacraments[21]. The Latin Church always emphasises it in the case of the seven Sacraments. But for the faithful of all Eastern Churches this concept of *realsymbol* extends even beyond the seven Sacraments, also to all other activities of the Church.

Mystery Revealed

The Sacraments in general can be very well said to be the Mystery revealed. Father Thomas Poovathanikunnel makes an exhaustive study of the topic in his book *Sacraments: the Mystery Revealed*[22]. After having made a

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[21] T.Poovathanikunnel, *Sacraments: the Mystery Revealed*, Kottayam 1998, pp.414-461

[22] OIRSI 202, Kottayam 1998

detailed analysis of the term Mystery among the classic Greek authors, the secular and religious usage of it, the term appearing in the Old and New Testaments and related writings, and in the early Christian writers of various traditions, the author concludes that, "the Christian Mystery is the symbolically revealed hidden salvific reality: containing paradoxes, hidden but revealed, already and not-yet or eschatological, historical and trans-historical, immanent but transcendent, concrete and spiritual or divine, covering past present and future"[23]. He goes on to define the sacramental mysteries as follows: "they are the revelatory events of the ineffable and eschatological salvific mysteries realized in Jesus Christ, revealed in symbols and experienced in the ecclesial celebration, leading the celebrants to a personal relationship with God in Christ and with the Holy Spirit"[24].

Patristic Understanding

Didache itself speaks about the sacraments of baptism and eucharist. Both of them are understood as instituted by Christ. Baptism, instituted by Jesus Christ, is different from the baptism of John the Baptist. Its matter is natural water and it is administered by washing in water. Both the celebrant and the candidate are asked to fast before the rite of baptizing. Living water is preferred; if it is not available, other water could be used; similarly, if cold water is not available, warm water may be also used. If there is not sufficient water to dip in, the celebrant may pour three times water on the head of the candidate, invoking the names of the Holy Trinity[25].

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[23] T.Poovathanikunnel, *Sacraments*, p. 302
[24] T.Poovathanikunnel, *Sacraments*, p. 303
[25] *Didache*, 7,1-4

Didache refers to the Eucharist directly or indirectly in its chapters 9, 10 and 14. We may quote here only what is said in chapter 9: "In regard to the Eucharist – you shall give thanks thus: First in regard to the cup: - We give you thanks, our Father, for the holy vine of David your Son, which you have made known to us through Jesus your Son. Glory be to you for ever. In regard to the broken bread: - We give you thanks, our Father, for the life and knowledge which you have made known to us through Jesus your Son. Glory be to you for ever. ..."[26].

The Apostolic Fathers, while defending the realities of faith against the Gnostics and Manichees, make some mention of the sacramental realities as well. They defend the goodness of nature and sensible realities as they are used in Christian celebrations of purification and sanctification. St. Justin the Martyr (d.165) mentions about baptism and Eucharist without bringing in the terminology of sacraments: "Then they are led by us to a place where there is water; and there they are reborn in the same kind of rebirth in which we ourselves were reborn"[27]. Speaking about Eucharist he says: "through the word of prayer that comes from (Christ), the food over which the eucharist has been spoken becomes the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus in order to nourish and transform our flesh and blood"[28].

It was Tertullian (d.220) who introduced the word *sacramentum* to Christian language. According to him, the persons in God, the economy of salvation, Christ's life, death

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[26] *Didache*, 9,1-5
[27] I Apology 61
[28] I Apology, 61,66

and resurrection, the figures for Christ in OT, are all sacraments. "Tertullian distinguishes a two-fold reality in their visible dimension: element and word. He understands "word" to be the word of God which has a determinative role in sacraments as do the things used in their celebration. Under the influence of neoplatonism some authors begin to speak of the visible dimension as a "symbol" of the divine operating in sacraments"[29].

The catechetical homilies of the Fathers, especially of St. Cyril of Jerusalem (d.387), St. Ambrose (d.397), St.John Chrysostom (d.407) and Theodore of Mopsuestia (d.428), expand upon the various rites of initiation and elaborate on their meaning. Some of the terminologies, such as *typos* and *aletheia*, signifying symbol and reality, they have used in that connection caused theological reflection in the course of time. According to them the "sacramental signs make present an aspect of Christ's incarnate life, death and resurrection so that participants can share in those saving mysteries"[30].

According to St. Augustine all sacraments pertain to the great Sacrament-Mystery, Christ and the Church. He calls sacrament a sacred sign, a *signaculum*, a visible word. When the word is joined with the material element the sacrament takes place. Sacraments are effective because Christ and the Holy Spirit act through them.

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[29] K.W.Irwin, "Sacrament", p.911
[30] K.W.Irwin, "Sacrament", p.911

Christology and Sacraments

The Eastern Churches consider the christological, ecclesiological and anthropological aspects as fundamental to every sacrament. The Western Church also reflects on the sacraments almost in the same way after Karl Rahner's exposition and elaboration of *realsymbol*, and the discussions in the second Vatican Council.

The second Vatican Council has given an added emphasis to Christology, namely, to the role of Christ in Christianity. The person of Christ has become the centre of Christian piety. With this emphasis, the importance given to other devotions declined. An added emphasis to the humanity of Jesus is given in such a way that the divinity is rather reached through the humanity. This in fact is the real sacramental approach. There we start with the sign and then proceed to the signified. "It starts with Jesus, a man apparently like any other, but then, thanks to the experience of faith, discovers what this Jesus is and means for us"[31] Edward Schillebeeckx also tries to explain the sacraments in their relation to man, the Church and Jesus Christ[32].

In this renewed approach to Christology we are brought closer to Jesus and the sacraments. Jesus reveals God to man, God as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Jesus shows man that the encounter with Himself automatically leads to the Father. "If you had known me, you would have known my Father also; henceforth you know him and have seen him"(*Jn* 14:7). Similarly Jesus reveals

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[31] R.Vaillancourt, *Toward a Renewal of Sacramental Theology*, Collegeville 1979, p. 36

[32] Cf. E.Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of Encounter with God*, New York 1963

Himself as Christ and Lord, Son of the Father, the Word of God. Jesus also reveals to us God as the Spirit as well. He announces the coming of the Holy Spirit (*Jn* 14:16-17). Jesus as the Sacrament is also the presence of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In short, Jesus is the human way of being God.

Jesus as the Sacrament reveals also man to himself. Jesus reveals to man his present reality under the aspect also of his eschatological future. To know Jesus is to know the eschatological image of man. St. Paul says that Christ is the firstborn of all creation.

Jesus is also the Sacrament of man to God. "As firstborn of creation, Christ gives expression to man before God. As perfect image of man, Jesus is prototypical, supreme, and perfect embodiment of man's response to the invitation which God extends to every human being that he should achieve his fulfilment as image of God"[33]. In God's eyes Jesus is the perfect expression of man. Thus He is the real Sacrament of man for God.

Impact of Christological Renewal

We are encouraged to consider all the sacraments in their relation to the paschal mystery. The new rituals in the Latin Church give concrete expression to this perspective by encouraging to celebrate them in the context of the Eucharist. In continuity with the Christological perspective all Sacraments should reveal something of God to man, of man to himself and of man to God.

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[33] R Vaillancourt, *Toward a Renewal of Sacramental Theology*, p. 38

Christ as Sacrament, is not identical with the Father and at the same time an expression of the Father. The Church is also the Sacrament in the same way. All the Sacraments are in the same way neither identical with nor isolated from the signified.

"As Sacrament Christ has a significance for all of mankind. He is a part that represents a whole: for God he represents the whole of mankind, and conversely for mankind he represents the totality of God. The sacraments in turn acquire this same value, which some exegetes and theologians have expounded in terms of "corporative person""[34]. The influence of a sacramental action is not exhausted with the moment of celebration but is extended to the whole of human life.

Ecclesiology and Sacraments

After the first Vatican Council, which emphasised the papal infallibility, there emerged a real search for an authentic picture of the Church. That helped in fact the publication of the encyclical *Mystici Corporis* of Pope Pius XII in 1943. There followed the two volumes of Father Sebastian Tromp SJ, the official theologian of Pope Pius XII, *Corpus Christi quod est Ecclesia*, published from Rome in 1946 and 1960. They tried to bring out the papal understanding of the Church. Vatican II in its dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, presented the new face of the Church which is quite different from Vatican I. "...very important aspect of the conciliar renewal is that it has presented the Church in a sacramental perspective, and

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[34] R Vaillancourt, *Toward a Renewal of Sacramental Theology*, pp. 40-41

this chiefly in terms of its relation to Christ as the primordial sacrament"[35].

The theme of the "Church as Sacrament of Christ" is practically a late comer in the western sacramental theology. The medieval Christianity which developed a sacramental theology for the western Church paid very little attention to the world outside the Church. "Since the distinction between the Church and the world had been eliminated, it was inevitable that people should lose the idea of the Church as a sacrament and should focus their attention on the individual sacraments"[36].

Together with the sacramental understanding of the Church, the second Vatican Council emphasised also the role and participation of all Christians in the mission of the Church. This brought in a new mentality in the Western Church: "the Christian people regard themselves no longer as consumers of ecclesial goods administered by the hierarchy but rather as themselves responsible for the mission of the Church and for bringing the Church to its fulfilment"[37]. This new outlook also brought change in the understanding of and participation in the sacraments.

Vatican II ecclesiology necessarily brought a change from the sacramental rites to the sacramental nature of the Church. The various sacraments began to be considered in their mutual relation and the relation to the fundamental sacrament, the Church and Jesus Christ the primordial Sacrament. The ancient adage, "the Sacraments make the

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[35] R Vaillancourt, *Toward a Renewal of Sacramental Theology*, pp. 42-43
[36] R Vaillancourt, *Toward a Renewal of Sacramental Theology*, p. 43
[37] R Vaillancourt, *Toward a Renewal of Sacramental Theology*, p. 44

Church, and the Church makes the Sacraments", began to be more felt in the ecclesial life. The integration of the sacraments into the great sacrament which is the Church brought about its own effect. The sacramental action began to be considered communitarian rather than individualistic. At the same time there was given all necessary emphasis also on the personal aspect. It was in fact a return to the patristic consideration which "saw clearly how a sacrament was to be defined first and foremost as an event for the community and not as an event for the individual"[38].

Thus the Church again became the principal agent of sacramental action and not merely the place where sacramental action takes place. "The ecclesial or communal aspect of a sacrament is therefore to be understood only in the light of the Church's sacramental vocation to carry on the work of God"[39].

Anthropology and Sacraments

The Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* expounds very clearly the biblical theme that man is the image of God[40]. It means that man is a reflection of God, a sacrament of God. This idea is made clearer with the threefold relations of Christian anthropology: "the relation to God that makes the human being capable of knowing and loving Him who is man's Creator and end; the relation to the world that makes man "lord of all creatures on earth", because as an incarnated spirit man expresses himself by means of science, the tool,

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[38] R.Vaillancourt, *Toward a Renewal of Sacramental Theology*, p.45
[39] R.Vaillancourt, *Toward a Renewal of Sacramental Theology*, p.46
[40] GS 12-22

and the machine; the relation to other human beings, apart from whom he cannot live and act to the full"[41].

These three kinds of relationships are constitutive to the authentic human life. Man is part of a history and his personality becomes clearer only with his relation to other persons. "Such a vision of man is quite different from the individualistic vision fostered (in the West) by the sacramental life of recent times; it emphasises a strongly communitarian and personalist side of human life"[42]. Here again the perspective on the sacraments changes drastically.

Since man is the image of God he is filled with a special divine energy which leads him to his eschatological destiny. Thus man emerges as the most dynamic creature in the world. This understanding also has its impact in the Christian sacramental life.

Similarly Vatican II promoted a unified vision of man which is in fact the vision of biblical anthropology. Man is not divided between body and soul and body is no more considered as the principle that causes sin. It was in fact a medieval distortion of biblical anthropology.

The Sacraments are always seen in their relation to Christ and the Church. In this connection, the words of C. Traets SJ are worth quoting: "The sacraments should be seen as a prolongation of the sacramentality – in an extended sense of the term – of Christ and his Church. We speak of "sacramentality in an extended sense" in order to indicate that we are no longer dealing directly with ritual, liturgical

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[41] R.Vaillancourt, *Toward a Renewal of Sacramental Theology*, p. 48
[42] R.Vaillancourt, *Toward a Renewal of Sacramental Theology*, pp. 49-50

celebrations. But the sacramentality in question is not therefore any the less real, for Christ and his Church are the efficacious manifestations of the salvation God offers us. And it is important to realize that priority belongs to the sacramentality of Christ and the Church, not to the ritual sacraments. This is clear from the way St. Paul and the Fathers use the term *Mysterim – Sacramentum.*

The whole purpose of the sacraments is to give concrete form to the sacramentality of Christ and His Church. More precisely, it is through the sacraments that we become more fully Christians in and through the Church. They give us an orientation that influences us in a special and decisive way to lead our lives and fulfil our mission through union with Christ in the Church"[43].

Secondly, the "sacramental theology must give greater attention to man himself, his experience, his social, cultural, and other environments. Consequently it must profit by the contributions the human sciences are making to our understanding of symbolic action, ritual behaviour, the experience of transcendence, the ways of celebrating life, and man's need to express himself. This anthropological approach will help in situating the sacraments within the whole range of symbolic actions and of man's celebrations of the events of human life, be these secular or religious"[44].

What the Sacraments Are

After having made a rather detailed discussion of the renewed understanding of sacramental theology in the

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[43] C.Traets, "Orientations pour une throlgie des sacraments", in *Questions liturgiques* 53(1972)107

[44] R.Vaillancourt, *Toward a Renewal of Sacramental Theology*, p.65

Western Church Raymond Vaillancourt gives a condensed description of the sacramental activity in the Church as follows: "the sacraments are the sign of a Church which reveals the face of God and the face of man; actualises (incarnates) these faces (by proclaiming them in a prefigurative way); celebrates this revelation, and the hope of its definitive actualization; of Christ who, through his Church, reveals the face of God and the face of man in its perfect form; makes real and visible what God is and what man is; celebrates the mystery of God and the mystery of man; of man who discovers who God is and what he himself is (what he is now and what he is called to become); allows himself to be transformed and transforms himself in accordance with the vision of God and with the eschatological image of himself as revealed in Jesus; celebrates this mystery of God and man in union with the assembly of Christians"[45].

"Eastern theology looks to the sacraments in their totality, and stresses what the whole does for the soul, insisting on the hidden, invisible aspects of the "mysteries". This authentic Byzantine tradition (also all other Eastern traditions) may be seen in almost every form of liturgical and spiritual life. The iconostasis "hides" the sanctuary, the "holy of holies", the veil of the Royal Doors further hides the most holy, the Eucharist, from the gaze of profane eyes. Even devotion to the Eucharistic Christ tends not to be separated from its central act, the Divine Liturgy. "Eucharistic" devotions are almost non-existent in the

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[45] R Vaillancourt, *Toward a Renewal of Sacramental Theology*, p. 123

Eastern Churches. There is no Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament outside the Divine Liturgy, no special "visit" to the Blessed Sacrament. God's presence is perceived in the act of going into a church, which is heaven on earth, in the mysterious quality of the divine as seen in icons, etc. Religious art itself is permeated with the spirit of "hiding" the sacred: where Western art exposes the Sacred Heart or the immaculate Heart of Mary (sometimes even in isolation from the person), Eastern icons never do, even in the case of Christ the *Chelovikoljubets*, the Lover of mankind.

Eastern theology dislikes "dissecting" the sacraments even abstractly into essential parts, non-essential parts, moments of consecration, etc. It is uncomfortable when forced to do it in controversies with the West. The whole Eucharistic Liturgy is looked upon as sanctifying. That is why Eastern theologians never divided it into parts so as to define which part could be missed on Sundays without serious sin. Even their notion of mortal and venial sin is different: if something is sinful, no matter how slightly, it ought not to be done. If one could not for some reason participate in the Eucharistic Liturgy on Sunday, one could with clear conscience participate in the Vesper Service and thus fulfil the precept of keeping the Lord's day holy.

Like the early Christians, the Eastern Church sees Christian life as one, in a sense a single mystery (or one great

sacrament) to be made holy through many different acts, some performed only once in a lifetime, others rarely, others again frequently, even daily. These acts or rites merely express different aspects of a total mystery, the Christian life. Hence the Eastern Church objects to a rigid distinction between the wider and the narrower sense of the term "mysteries", as occurred in the Western Church with definition of sacraments and sacramentals. There is a hierarchy of value in the sacraments, yet every sanctifying rite is precious and life giving. The rite of Entrance into Religion or the Great Blessing of Waters at Epiphany may do more spiritual good to a soul than the sacrament of penance carelessly received"[46].

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[46] C.Kucharek, *The Sacramental Mysteries,* pp.338-339

Chapter 2

THE MYSTERIES OF INITIATION

It is generally known that the Eastern Churches, both Catholic and Orthodox, celebrate the first three sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist together. A different model of celebration, namely, celebrating them separately, exists today only in the Latin tradition and in some latinised Oriental Churches. The Syro-Malabar Church is one among such latinised Oriental Churches.

During the first four centuries there was no distinction between East and West in the practice of celebrating the mysteries or sacraments. Then the emphasis was mostly on baptism and eucharist; but to some extent the other sacraments were also discernible.

> According to the doctrine and practice of the ancient Church, inspired by the New Testament, the faithful who received the eschatological gift of the Spirit of the Risen accepted that the same Spirit operate in his or her person the assimilation to Christ the Lord. The baptismal rebirth as children of God, inheritors of the Kingdom, justified, redeemed and sanctified, entailed the full entrance into the people of God. The ultimate "sign" of this event was the admission to the banquet of the Kingdom. That indivisible sacrament was, therefore, necessarily conferred, with the most coherence, in a single celebrative context[1].

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[1] *Instruction*, n. 42

In the 5th century the second sacrament, Confirmation, was separated from Baptism and Eucharist in the Latin Church. In the 9th century there was promulgated a separate ritual fully in itself for the second sacrament and thus the separation between the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation was sealed. In the 13th century the age of reason was prescribed necessary for the reception of Confirmation in the Latin Church. Naturally there came out an understanding that the reception of Holy Communion is obligatory for receiving the sacrament of Confirmation. This is, in fact, very strange to all Eastern traditions, for, they recognise the reception of Holy Communion only after receiving the second sacrament.

> For historical and cultural reasons, such practices were abandoned by the Western Church, and the baptismal initiation was conferred to children in various successive moments. However, the ancient use was maintained intact and uninterruptedly in the East. This link is so strong that, in quite a number of contexts, the term "Baptism" usually implies all three of the phases of Christian Initiation: this is the title attributed to them in many manuscripts or printed euchologies[2]

The members of Eastern Churches are very glad to see that the second Vatican Council's constitution on Sacred Liturgy has directed that the Confirmation rite of the Latin Church be re-drafted in such a way that the connection between Confirmation and Christian Initiation be made more visible (SC 71).

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[2] *Instruction*, n. 42

The mysteries of Christian initiation are Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. It is practically incomprehensible for an Eastern faithful that they are celebrated separately in the Church. The Easterners are always happy to see that these sacraments are at least discussed together in their mutual relatedness.

> Initiation is, in reality, the one and indivisible celebration of the entrance into the life of Christ, into the community that lives in him. This entrance, initiated with the first call to the faith, reaches its culminating point in the Pascal Mystery of Christ, in whose death we are immersed to be raised in his resurrection which renders us children of God and the temple of the Spirit. "Anointed" by the Spirit for the work of the Kingdom, we are thus rendered fit to participate in the banquet of the Kingdom. This is the motivating factor in the composition of cann. 695 and 697 which prescribe the administration of the three sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation with the holy Myron, and Holy Communion in conjunction with or at least one not long after another[3]

According to several scholars, this separation between the sacraments of initiation in the Latin Church happened due to the separation between the christological and pneumatological dimensions of human salvation. Human salvation for the early Church and then for all Eastern traditions, is the elevation of man in the Church into the inner-Trinitarian life. The action of the Holy Trinity outwards is understood as one and united. Jesus' death and resurrection is meaningless for a Christian without Pentecost.

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[3] *Instruction*, n. 42

Only in the Trinitarian action that the human salvation becomes effective and meaningful. "It is good that I go; only if I go, the Paraclete will come to you"(*Jn* 16,7). Christ's Spirit is operative in the Church up to the end of time. Each one is eschatologically oriented in Baptism by the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit Himself continuously transforms the baptised to Jesus Christ: *Malahanutha, Theosis*, divinization. "God became man, so that man may become God", writes St. Athanasius of Alexandria. "You put on our humanity in order to vivify it by Your divinity", the Syro-Malabarians pray in their Holy *Qurbana*[4].

Pneumatology is, perhaps, at the core of Eastern sacramental theology. Every celebration in the East is explicitly understood as a positive action of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Baptism, therefore, is considered to be intimately united with the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is considered to be the second sacrament.

A Greek Catholic monk from Lebanon, Lutfi Laham, writes as follows: "Very rarely, and only after a theological reflection, did I think of confirmation while administering baptism. I baptise, and for me confirmation (the *Agion Myron*), the sealing (*sphragis*) of the Holy Spirit, belongs naturally to baptism, in the same way as the arrival of the Holy Spirit is necessary for the perfection of Christ's work. The apostles and the first Christians acted likewise. The construction of economy is the same. The faithful, too, have neither any other feeling nor any other conviction. A priest who doesn't anoint the child with *Myron* immediately after

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[4] V.Pathikulangara, *Qurbana*, Chaldeo-Indian Liturgy 2, Kottayam 1998, Appendix I, p. 33

baptism is a heretic in the eyes of a genuine Orthodox Christian"[5].

This consciousness of the Oriental Christianity is well expressed in the words of Symeon the New Theologian as he wrote: "He is not really baptised who didn't receive the holy Myron"[6].

Since the Eastern Churches are closer to the apostolic practice with regard to the celebration of the sacraments, this their consciousness on pneumatology is to be considered basic to Christian celebration.

> In Baptism, the person is freed from sin, reborn to a new life, re-clothed in Christ and incorporated in the Church. In Chrismation with the holy *Myron* he or she is signed with the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. The full initiation is made final by the reception of the Eucharist, a sacrament not only of the communion of the individual with Christ, Head of the Mystical Body, but also of the communion among all the faithful, members of the Body who live the new life in Him. The nourishment of the Body and the Blood of the incarnated Word brings the Christian to perfection, in such a way that it is no longer he that lives but Christ who lives in him (cf. *Gal* 2:20). The sacramental celebration of Christian Initiation is the visible gesture which confers the gift of benevolence offered by the heavenly Father to mankind in his incarnated Son, and communicates eternal life to

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[5] "Der pneumatologische Aspekt der Sakramente der christlichen Mystagogie (oder Initiation)", in *Kyrios* 12(1972)104
[6] PG 155, 187

> whoever listens to the word of Christ and believes in Him who sent him (cf. *Jn* 5:24)[7]

The christological and pneumatological dimensions of the mysteries are not opposed to each other, but are complimentary to each other and perfecting each other. The life of the Church, namely, of Christ's body, is a life in the Holy Spirit, who is the Lord and giver of life and who directs it towards the eschatological culmination, the *parousia*. Man who has become a new eschatological being in Baptism, has to continue growing in God-likeliness by the help of the Holy Spirit. This *Malaḥanutha/ Theosis*, divinisation is made possible by the reception of the second sacrament in the Church.

For the Eastern traditions the sacrament of baptism is the "ecclesiastical womb". The Holy Spirit produces new life from this womb, who are in fact the children of the Father, brothers and sisters to Jesus Christ. Both the East and West Syriac liturgical texts bear witness to this particular concept.

In the prayer of consecrating the baptismal water in the East Syriac or Chaldeo-Indian tradition the priest prays: "May this water be signed and blessed with the holy oil, that it may become a new and spiritually regenerating bosom through sin-forgiving baptism, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"[8].

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[7] *Instruction*, n. 43

[8] G.P.Badger, *Nestorians and their Rituals*, Vol. II, London 1852, p. 207

Holy Spirit and Pre-Baptismal Anointing

Pre-baptismal anointing is part of the rites of catechumenate. It comes before the baptismal washing just after the exorcism and profession of faith. In Byzantine Rite the oil used for this anointing is called the "oil of joy". It imparts the Holy Spirit, the giver of life and holiness[9]. The West Syrians have a beautiful prayer of invocation in this context: "May it please you, Lord, to send down Your Holy Spirit on these your servants. Let Him descend and fathom all their limbs, purge and sanctify them in advance so that they be worthy of the holy anointment and of the perfect belief in Jesus Christ, our Lord. ... Holy Father, who, through the intermediary of your holy apostles, gave the Holy Spirit to those who were baptised, send now down through the shadow of my weak hands the same Holy Spirit on these your servants, who are preparing themselves for baptism, so that they, filled with Him and His charisms, will bear fruit..."[10].

The East Syrians also have a beautiful prayer of invocation on the holy oil. It reads like this: "We pray and beseech Thee... that by Thy will, O God the Father, and by the will of Thy holy Son our Lord Jesus Christ, grace from the Holy Ghost, who is perfect in essence of Thee, and one with Thee in substance and in the work of creation, may descend and mingle with this oil, and bestow upon all who shall be anointed therewith, the pledge of the resurrection from the dead, perfect adoption, salvation from the pangs of sin, and joy in the rest of heaven..."[11].

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[9] Cf S.Heitz (ed.), *Der Orthodox Gottesdienst*, Mainz, pp. 480f.
[10] Cf E.P.Siman, *L'Experience de l'Esprit par l'Eglise selon la Tradition Syrienne d'Antioche*, Paris 1971, pp. 83f.
[11] G.P.Badger, *Nestorians and their Rituals*, p. 204

The oil for pre-baptismal anointing is signed with the oil in the Horn and thus it becomes "the image of imperishability in sin-extinguishing baptism". This oil mixture indicates the uninterrupted activity of the Holy Spirit who is given in fullness to the Church.

It is the Holy Spirit who reveals us God's hidden riches and enables us to become God's children. The oil which is consecrated by the descend of the Holy Spirit is a sign of His presence and working. The Holy Spirit is Christ's Spirit and being anointed with the consecrated oil we become Christ's equals. The pre-baptismal anointing always leads to the baptismal washing. The threefold immersion there, seals the confession of faith, affirms the victory over Satan, and introduces the believer to a relation of childlike familiarity with the heavenly Father who imparts the living Spirit. The Holy Spirit, however, creates the new life in the risen Lord. In short, the baptised person is filled with the seeds of resurrection, which is to come up and produce fruits, the gifts of the Holy Spirit[12].

Holy Spirit, the Giver of Baptism

According to the Eastern theological understanding the Holy Spirit is the true giver of the mysteries. By the NT priesthood, the bishops and priests became the distributors of the mysteries. Through the sacrament of ordination by the imposition of hands the ordained becomes a pneumatophor, a

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[12] Cf B.Bobrinskoy, "Le Mystere Pascal du Bapteme", in *Bapteme-Sacrement d'unite*, Tours-Paris 1971, p. 124

porter of the Spirit, a visible servant and mediator of the Holy Spirit[13].

Through Baptism the Holy Spirit introduces the humans to Trinitarian life. It definitely is a life united with Christ. The Lord here becomes the giver of the Spirit. This situation is brought about in baptism by the sacrament of completion or Confirmation and it is prolonged through the Christian life by means of Eucharistic mystery[14].

"The Holy Spirit works in us before, during and after baptism. In baptism, every movement of the Holy Spirit aims at bringing us into a living communion with Christ and with the Father. All the effects of baptism are accomplished by the action of the Holy Spirit"[15].

For St. John Chrysostom, the Holy Spirit is the sacramental agent of baptism: "For it is not a man who does what is done, but it is the grace of the Spirit which sanctifies the nature of the water and touches your head together with the hand of the priest"[16].

Philoxenus of Mabbug (+523) considers Jesus' baptism in Jordan the prototype of Christian baptism. According to him, "the flesh needs a soul, and they both need

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[13] Cf J.Madey, "Das Charisma des Apostolischen Amtes im Denken und Beten der Kirche des Ostens", in *Catholica* 27/3-4(1973).
[14] Cf B.Bobrinskoy, "Le Mystere Pascal du Bapteme". p. 125
[15] J.Chalassery, *The Holy Spirit and Christian Initiation in the East Syrian Tradition*, Rome 1995, p. 124
[16] P. Harkins, (trans.), *St. John Chrysostom: Baptismal Instructions*, ACW 31, Westminister 1963, p. 47

the Holy Spirit. Where as the flesh receives the soul in the womb, so the man receives the Spirit in baptism"[17].

By being united with Christ in baptism we receive the special gift of becoming the children of God. The life-giving Spirit makes us reborn and integrates us physically into the glorified body of Christ and He in turn introduces us to a childlike familiarity with the heavenly Father. "You have received from me the Holy Spirit's gift", says Theodore of Mopsuestia to the newly baptised, "and now you posses the liberty of calling God father"[18].

According to Mar Aprem, "the Son comes to John to receive from him baptism, to add the invisible Spirit to the visible water so that the minds should receive the Spirit's gift, while the body receives the water's humidity". He tries to compare our baptism to what happened in Mary's womb and in Christ's baptism. In all cases the active agent is the Holy Spirit[19].

The faith in the presence of the Holy Spirit in the water of baptism is very clearly manifested in the prayers and action of the priest towards the conclusion of East Syrian baptism. It is the prayer for absolving the water for baptism: "Thou, O Lord, art blessed, holy, and immortal, and Thy depth is past finding out. In Thy own will Thou didst create us, and when we called upon Thee, Thou didst not deny unto us Thy gift, but didst send to us the Holy Ghost, and this

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[17] A. de Halleux, *Philoxene de Mabboug: sa vie, ses ecrits, sa theologie*, Loewen 1963, pp. 422.455

[18] Theodore de Mopseste, *Homilies Catechetiques*, ed. R. Tonneau-R. Devreesse, Vatikan 1949, pp. 296f.

[19] E. Beck, "La Bapteme chez Saint Ephrem", in *L'Orient Syrien* 1(1956)112.114-115

water was sanctified by Amen, and by the same Amen it is loosed from its sanctity and returns to its former nature. For all these Thy mercies towards us, we would ascribe unto Thee glory, honour, praise, and worship, now and for ever and ever. Amen"[20].

During this prayer the priest stirs the water about and quickly withdraws his hand as if he is taking something away therefrom. The water thus absolved from its holiness is poured out into a clean place, which is not trod upon[21].

The Second Sacrament

The very name given to the second sacrament in various traditions proclaims the difference that exists between these traditions in understanding and celebrating this sacrament. The Latin tradition calls it **Confirmation** which gives the idea of fixing or confirming in faith and bringing to Christian maturity, making the candidate a soldier of Christ.

In Greek Byzantine tradition, they call it **Chrismation** in the context of a special anointing with the holy oil *Myron* or Chrism. It is understood always against the backdrop of icon painting in this tradition. Icon, as we know, is the painting of a supernatural vision of a faithful, which is achieved through serious study and intuitive meditation. It is in fact the expression of an intense religious experience. The last thing in any icon painting is to smear it with oil so that it may be protected from external enemies such as ants, insects, and so on. Similarly according to the

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[20] G.P.Badger, *Nestorians and their Rituals*, pp. 211-212
[21] G.P.Badger, *Nestorians and their Rituals*, p. 212

understanding of the Byzantine tradition, one becomes an icon of Christ in baptism and through **Chrismation**, the anointing with holy *Myron*, he/she is protected from all kinds of external enemies.

In the Syriac tradition, this second sacrament is called the ***Quddasa d-Sumlaya***, the "Sacrament of Perfection or Completion". Man is created in the image and likeness of God, namely, as an icon of God. This image is marred or tarnished or disfigured by the sin of man, i.e., the God-orientation is lost. By the redemptive work of Christ, the original glamour and beauty of creation is restored to man. But in each individual case it happens by the Holy Spirit when he/she receives the sacraments of initiation. The sacraments of initiation for the Syriac tradition is the process of giving the Spirit and the whole Christian life is the living in the Spirit. Hence the second sacrament is considered to be the completion/perfection of the giving of the Spirit and the Eucharist the growth in the life of the Spirit.

The Seal of the Holy Spirit

The anointment with the holy *Myron* after baptism is testified rather late in the history of Christianity. The early Syriac and Greek fathers such as Mar Aprem, Aphrahat, John Chrysostom and so on do not mention about such an anointing. That does not mean that the second sacrament was unknown to these traditions. Although the imposition of the hands was there, the anointing with the oil was only introduced late.

Clement of Alexandria (ca.150-211) appears to be the first in the east mentioning chrismation as a "seal"[22]. Cyril of Jerusalem (ca.348) speaks about the "imposition of hands" and chrismation where God "give you the seal of the Holy Spirit, indelible throughout all ages..."[23]. He clearly attributes the bestowal of the Holy Spirit to the unction with chrism: "to you was given an unction...and this is the Holy Spirit", "while your body is anointed with visible ointment, your soul is sanctified by the Holy and life-giving Spirit", "after holy baptism and the mystical chrism, after having put on the whole armour of the Holy Spirit, you are to stand against the power of the adversary", and, "you were truly anointed by the Holy Spirit", and so on[24].

"Of all the so-called *Church Orders*, only Book VII of the *Apostolic Constitutions* had been affected by the new developments. Here, the rite of imparting the Holy Spirit consists of the unction only, but it is still called by the old name, the 'laying-on of hands'"[25].

Towards the end of the 4th century the custom to anoint the baptised with holy *Myron* is at least partly ascertainable. The Laodicean Synod (ca. 363) prescribes so in its canon 48: "After baptism the baptised have to be anointed with heavenly chrism and made participants of God's realm"[26].

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[22] C.Kucharek, *The Sacramental Mysteries*, pp. 137-138
[23] PG 33, 365A
[24] PG 33, 1093A
[25] C.Kucharek, *The Sacramental Mysteries*, p. 148
[26] Cf B.Botte, "L'onction postbaptismale dans l'ancien Patriarcat d'Antioche" in *Miscellanea Liturgica*, Roma 1967, p. 800

It appears that there was only one anointing for the sacraments of initiation in the East Syriac or Chaldeo-Indian tradition up to the 6th century and that was the pre-baptismal anointing. "All the available sources of early Syrian tradition upto the 6th century, ... speak of only one anointing, which they call the, *rusma*, 'sign'; and this took place immediately before the baptism of water. This order of Christian initiation (the anointing, baptism of water and first holy communion) is confined to Syrian or Syriac-speaking Churches and it goes back to the third century at least, and probably even earlier"[27].

Eucharist, the Culmination of the Mystagogy

Human birth is naturally connected with the child's growth. The human faculties and senses which are discernible at the birth slowly get developed and matured as the child grows. In the same way the spiritual faculties and senses which the Holy Spirit infuses into the human being through baptism and confirmation develop to maturity through the repeated participation in the Holy Eucharist. The initiated one must grow. It is his/her right and privilege. Growth happens only through the Eucharist. Hence the early Church was very particular to give the Eucharist to the newly baptised as early as possible. Thus the Eucharist also became part of the sacraments of initiation.

Our Lord Himself said: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his

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[27] J.Chalassery, *The Holy Spirit and Christian Initiation in the East Syrian Tradition*, p. 88

blood, you have no life in you"(*Jn* 6,53). The real spiritual life, therefore, depends on the participation of the Holy Eucharist. A baptised person who is not participating in the Eucharist is said to be a holy monster having no childlike piety and love. According to St. Augustine, "without baptism (and confirmation) and without participation in the Lord's body the little children have no life"[28]. Mar Aprem writes, "the fire and the Spirit are in our baptism; in the bread and in the chalice, there are also the fire and the Spirit"[29].

The Syriac fathers always emphasise the necessity of faith to discern the working of the Holy Spirit behind the water of baptism, the oil of the sacrament of Perfection, and the bread and wine of the Eucharist. Moses Bar Kepha puts it as follows: "The Eucharistic offering and the *Myron* bring profit to those who no longer look with the physical eye at what can be seen, that is to say, the bread and the wine, but who, using the eyes of the soul, apprehend and perceive God the Word united to the bread and wine and to the oil of the *myron*"[30].

It is the Eucharist that transforms the human life filled with the Holy Spirit in baptism and the sacrament of Perfection. Isaac of Nineveh explains it as follows: "When we have found love, we eat the heavenly bread and we are sustained without labour and without weariness. Heavenly bread is that which has descended from heaven and which gives the world life; this is the food of angels. He who has found love eats Christ at all times and becomes immortal from thence onwards; for whoever eats of this bread shall not

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[28] PL 44, 576

[29] E. Beck, "La Bapteme chez Saint Ephrem", p. 115

[30] quoted in S. Brock, *The Holy Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition*, Poona 1979, p.117

taste death in eternity. Blessed is he who has eaten from the bread of love, which is Jesus! Whoever is fed with love is fed with Christ, who is the all-governing God. Witness is John, who says 'God is love' (1 *Jn* 4,16). He who lives in love in this world breathes in life from God; he breathes here the air of the resurrection, in which the righteous will delight at the resurrection. Love is the kingdom of which our Lord spoke when he symbolically promised his disciples that they would eat in his kingdom: 'you shall eat and drink at the table of my kingdom' (*Lk* 22,30). What should they eat, if not love? Love is sufficient to feed man instead of food and drink. This is the wine that gladdens the heart of man (*Ps* 104,15). Blessed is he who has drunk from this wine. This is the wine from which the lascivious have drunk and they became chaste, the sinners drunk and they forgot the ways of offence, the drunkards drunk and they became abstinent, the rich and they became desirous of poverty, the poor and they became rich in hope, the infirm and they became strong, fools and they became wise"[31].

The Holy Spirit not only effects the transformation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, but He Himself is present in them and working through them. Mar Aprem writes: "In your bread there is hidden the Spirit who is not consumed, in your wine there dwells the fire that is not drunk: the Spirit is in your bread, the fire in your wine, a manifold wonder, that our lips have received. When the Lord came down to earth to mortal men, he created them again in a new creation, like angels, mingling fire and Spirit within

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[31] S. Brock. *The Holy Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition*, p. 118

them, that in a hidden manner they might be of fire and Spirit"[32].

"By virtue of the Holy Spirit 'mixing' in the baptismal water and in the eucharistic bread and wine, these representatives of the material world not only take on a new mode of existence, but are rendered capable of conveying this new mode of existence to those who participate in the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist: the fire of the Holy Spirit becomes mingled in the baptised, transforming them into angelic beings, denizens of Paradise"[33].

The liturgical poets of the Syriac tradition always try to stimulate the awareness of the baptised to sense the Eucharist a necessity for their Christian living and growth in the process of divinisation.

In the East Syrian Eucharistic celebration the priest or archdeacon refers to *Jn* 19,34 in the preparation rites. Jacob of Sarug uses the same passage to bring out the paradox of the wedding feast where the Bridegroom is slain: "From the baptismal water comes the chaste and holy union of Bride and Bridegroom, united in Spirit in baptism. Women are not joined to their husbands in the same way as the Church is joined with the Son of God. What bridegroom dies for his bride, apart from our Lord? What bride sought out a slain man to be her husband? Who, from the beginning of the world, ever gave his blood as the wedding gift, apart from the Crucified one, who sealed the marriage with his wounds? Who has ever seen a corpse placed in the middle of a

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[32] quoted in S. Brock, *The Holy Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition*, p. 123

[33] S.Brock, *The Holy Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition*, p. 123

wedding feast, with the bride embracing it, waiting to be comforted by it? At what wedding feast apart from this did they break the body of the bridegroom for the guests in place of other food? Wives are separated from their husbands by death, but this Bride is joined to her Beloved by death! He died on the cross and gave his body to the glorious bride, who plucks and eats it every day at his table; he opened up his side and mixed his cup with holy blood, giving it her to drink so that she might forget her many idols. She anointed him with oil, she put him on in the water, she consumed him in the bread, she drank him in the wine, so that the world might know that two of them were one. He died on the cross, but she did not exchange him for another: she is full of love for his death, knowing that from it she has life"[34].

According to the East Syriac or Chaldeo-Indian tradition, "the rites of Initiation begins with the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. He is invoked at the consecration of the oil and the Spirit of holiness is conveyed to the baptismal candidate through the *rusma* (signing) before the act of baptism. The Spirit cleanses him from all sins, separates him for Christ and leads him to the baptism of water, the participation in the death and resurrection of Christ. There he is 'born again' into eternal life. Then the new-born person is given the nourishment of the body and blood of Christ. The biblical and early patristic vision of Christian Initiation converge on this early East Syrian liturgical practice"[35].

Up to the 6th century, it appears that there was no post-baptismal anointing in the East Syriac or Chaldeo-Indian

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[34] quoted in S. Brock, *The Holy Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition*, pp. 124-125

[35] J. Chalassery, *The Holy Spirit and Christian Initiation in the East Syrian Tradition*, p. 245

tradition. The Christian Initiation was surrounded on the pre-baptismal anointing, baptismal washing, imposition of the hands and Eucharistic communion. It was very close to the apostolic practice of the first century.

"In the seventh century, Isho Yahb III, the Patriarch of the Church of the East, undertook a revision of the order of the rites of Initiation and introduced the post-baptismal anointing accompanied by the prayers of imposition of the hands. ... In the East Syrian tradition this post-baptismal anointing seems to be performed as the completion of baptism. The predominant element that we see in the prayers and ceremonies that are subsequent to the baptism of water, is that, they are for the completion and perfection of baptism. By the rite of post-baptismal anointing, the baptised are completely immersed in the mystery of Christ and perfected by the gift of the Holy Spirit. In the formula of post-baptismal anointing there is no reference to the anointing but to 'the completion'. It is the perfect tense that is used here, because it supposes that the gift of the Holy Spirit has already been received. The bestowal of the Holy Spirit seems to be attributed to the pre-baptismal anointing, and the post baptismal anointing seems to serve the proclamation of the completion of the union between the Holy Spirit and the baptised person. According to the interpretation of the Syrian fathers, the perfection of baptism consists in the unification of body and soul with the Holy Spirit. However, the Fathers do not specify the exact moment of this unification in the baptismal ceremonies. The attempt to specify the exact point and precise time of this unification would not be consonant to the mentality of ancient Christians. They saw the whole of

these mysteries as one event which took place in the 'spacetime' by the action of the Holy Spirit"[36].

Indigenised Customs of the Thomas Christians

With regard to the celebration of the Mysteries, the Thomas Christians of India had their own age-old customs. Most of them are recorded by the foreign missionaries in and after the 16th century. The important documents which contain such information are the following:

1. the writings of the foreign missionaries,
2. the three letters of Mar Jacob (in India 1503-1550) written to the Patriarch,
3. the narration of Joseph the Indian before Pope Alexander VI in 1501
4. the Decrees of the Synod of Diamper in 1599 and
5. the liturgical books of the time preserved in India and outside.

The general impression of the Portuguese missionaries in the 16th century appears to be that the Thomas Christians of India had not all the seven Sacraments or Mysteries. They doubted in fact with regard to the existence of Confirmation, Reconciliation and Anointing the sick. Those who know about the different mode and time of celebrating these three Sacraments in the East Syrian or Chaldeo-Indian tradition can easily understand the reason behind the doubt of the Portuguese missionaries.

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[36] J. Chalassery, *The Holy Spirit and Christian Initiation in the East Syrian Tradition*, pp. 245-246

Joseph the Indian said in Venice that the infants were baptised usually after 40 days though there was early baptism in emergency cases[37]. According to Penteado, a Portuguese missionary, no one was baptised before he/she was three years old; there were also cases of late baptism, even at the age of 50 or so. He himself has seen people whose children are baptised, but they themselves not. He attributes the situation to the negligence of the Babylonian bishops, who were shameless, fearless and fond of money. Those bishops would not baptise, writes Penteado, unless the prescribed age was over and could baptise in great numbers. Part of the alms, given during baptism, was utilised for the running of the church and part was divided among the celebrant and other ministers[38].

Penteado speaks also about the lack of episcopal chrism after baptism. He narrates about his quarrel with the younger bishop in this regard and how he persuaded the elder bishop to give chrism to five people, and how the younger bishop quarrelled with the elder one on that accord[39].

Barbosa Durate, another Portuguese missionary, writes that the Thomas Christian faithful lacked both doctrine and baptism. According to him the Chaldean ('Armenian') priests visited India only at intervals; they always demanded money for baptising; and when they had enough of it, they returned home[40].

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[37] Cf. A.M.Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, Vol. I, Bangalore 1989, p.203
[38] Cf. A.M.Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, p. 203
[39] Cf. A.M.Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, pp. 206-207
[40] Cf. A.M.Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, p. 204

M. Carneiro, another Portuguese missionary, visited a remote village in 1557. Some of the people there asked for baptism and he baptised them. On baptising they offered some money to him according to their usual custom. When he refused to receive it, they were really offended. But when they were told of his good intention, they were rather edified[41].

Dionysio, the Rector of the Jesuit College at Cochin, wrote that many among the Thomas Christians remained non-baptised. The reason for that is the exclusive reservation of baptising to the bishops. He says that the faithful offered money during baptism, but it was according to each one's capacity[42].

According to De Monserrate, baptism was given to children 40 days after their birth; but there remained many non-baptised and some even died without baptism. He gives two reasons for this state of affairs: "first, the lack of priests; one priest alone could not perform the complicated ceremonies and many of the priests did not know how to perform these ceremonies; and secondly, the difficult problem of money to be paid to the priests for baptism. Only a few people knew the essentials of baptism in order to administer it in case of necessity"[43].

All the documents, in one way or other, clearly show the lack of real understanding of Oriental style of administering the sacraments by the European missionaries. The Latin mode of administration was the only true form for

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[41] Cf. A.M.Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, p. 204
[42] Cf. A.M.Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, p. 204
[43] A.M.Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, pp. 204-205

them. They never took pain at least to understand what the Oriental style was. At the same time they tried their best to substitute them with their own Western style.

Almost all the missionaries complain about the avarice of the Chaldean bishops and priests. But some of them made remarks such as: the baptism was reserved to the bishops, one priest alone could not perform it, many priests did not know the details of performing it, they used to baptise only in great numbers and proper seasons and so on. These remarks, perhaps, give us the real reason why there remained many non-baptised among the Thomas Christians of the 16th century.

The bishops from Persia came to Malabar only at intervals. They might have definitely followed the ancient East Syrian custom of baptising in community on Easter or Pentecost. The Paschal and Pentecostal rites of baptism were naturally very solemn and long that many did not know their details. Moreover, such celebrations always involved the participation of many priests. The people naturally preferred to be baptised by the bishops during such solemn occasions. Mar Jacob himself is writing to the king of Portugal in 1524 on this regard. Hence the maximum possible for a bishop in an year is two or three such convocations. Even if we suppose that there were several bishops in Malabar at a given time, the possibility of baptism is so much limited. The maximum number of bishops at a given time was only five. Hence it is very natural that many remained non-baptised for several years. Continuing the tradition of early Church, such non-baptised persons were all counted among the Christians.

The problem of money might have been part of ordinary human weakness in all cases. Any way, the parishes

and the clergy were maintained partially through the offerings of the people in connection with the liturgical celebrations. Even today it is so both in the East and in the West. Moreover, we hear of several cases of mal-practices with the so-called stipend system of Eucharistic celebration, first developed in the Western Church and spread to several Eastern Churches.

The missionaries do not give any detail of the liturgical rite. They were all conducted in Syriac language which was unfamiliar and unknown to the missionaries. They write that they were different from those of theirs. They even suspected the validity of several sacraments including baptism. In that connection, it is interesting to read the letter of Mar Jacob to the king of Portugal in 1524:

> "Do not think, that I am so silly and know so little of the law, that I do not know the Holy Scriptures, Old and New, as far as concerning this matter of baptising, though it be true that I am not instructed in the usages of the Popes and the Roman usage".

Some Social Customs

Namakarana: According to the documentation of Penteado, sometimes before baptism, the priest goes to the house of the baptismal candidate, blesses some legumes and places a little of it in the mouth of the child giving it the name. He was told that it was an ancient custom. The Thomas Christians always preferred biblical names. The paternal grandfather's or grandmother's name was given to the first child and to the second the maternal side was considered. Biblical names always received certain modifications according to the Malabar taste with the Thomas Christians: *Thoma* became *Thommi*, *Thoman*,

Thommachan, *Thommakunju*, etc.; *Jacob* became *Chacko*, *Chakkappan*, *Chakku*, etc.; *Mariam* to *Mariamma*, *Mariakkutty*, *Kunjumariam*, etc.; *Elisba* to *Eli*, *Elamma*, *Elsy*, etc. Such transformation or modification is very common also with their Hindu brethren.

Jatakarma: Determining the star of the child was a common practice among the Thomas Christians. For that they used to call the village astrologer concerned. A newborn child was usually fed with powdered gold, mixed with honey or ghee and a substance called *vayambu*. This is done in view of the health and better complexion of the child.

Annaprasna: It is the rice giving ceremony. It was always conducted very solemnly. De Monserrate gives a short but very good explanation of the custom: "At the end of six months (after the birth of the child)they are wont to give the child rice, for which they invite also their relatives and friends. The priest comes to bless the eating. He takes a little from the rice prepared with black dilute sugar (jaggery) and puts it to the mouth of the child; he does not touch the rice with his hand, but with a cross of gold or gold-plated silver, fitted inside a circle. After this has been done by the priest, the relatives and friends repeat it; then they all go to eat the best possible meals"[44]. The Hindus go to their special temples for rice giving ceremony while the Christians were doing it at home.

Children of the Thomas Christians used ornaments similar to those of Brahmins, the highest caste: leopard claws or mangoose teeth set in gold was a common ornament. A golden cross was always added to the neck ornament.

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[44] A. de Monserrate, *Informacion de los Christianos de S.Thome*, f. 150

Teachers of the Christian children were very often from among the Hindus. Still, they used to teach them the necessary Christian prayers as well. Together with the Nair boys, the Christian boys learned also fencing, the then military requisite.

Most of such innocent local customs among the Thomas Christians of India were all banned or prohibited in the so-called Synod of Diamper in 1599.

Present Day Celebration of the Mysteries

G. P. Badger supplies us with the ancient order of the Mysteries of Initiation among the East Syrians[45]. It is said there that "the same baptismal office is used by the Nestorians and Chaldeans for infants and adults". The same ought to have been the situation also with the St. Thomas Christians of India till the 16th century. After the Synod of Diamper (1599) they were using the Syriac translation of the Roman Sacramentary according to the Bragan specifications.

The Syro-Malabarians or Chaldeo-Indians are using today a Malayalam translation of the above mentioned sacramentary with some indigenous specialities. The Syro-Malabar Bishops' Synod has already published a renewed draft order of the sacraments of initiation in 1994[46]. It is intended for adult baptism and is proposed to be celebrated in four stages: 1) the Entrance to the Catechumenate, 2) Instruction and Learning, 3) Lord's Prayer and Pre-Baptismal Anointing, and 4) Baptismal Washing or Immersion,

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[45] G.P.Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, pp. 195-214

[46] *Synodal News* 2(February 1994)68-92

Imposition of hand and Anointing with the holy *Myron* and Eucharist with Holy Communion. A separate order is proposed for the baptism of infants[47]. Together with it an order for administering the second sacrament, namely, the sacrament of perfection is also provided[48]. These orders are not yet approved and published for the celebration of the community. Still we give here below the sketch of these orders.

Mysteries of Initiation for the Adults[49]

Part I: Entrance to Catechumenate

(Begins at the entrance of the church)

- Questions and answers
- Priestly prayer
- *Psalm* 43: 2-5 with *Ps* 23: 1 as *qanona*
- Imposition of hand on the candidate and prayer
- Questions and answers
- Procession to the *Bema*
- During the procession they sing *Ps* 34: 3-6
- Lighting the lamp at the *Bema*
- Reading: *Rom* 13: 11b-14
- Homily
- *Karozutha*, the Proclamation prayer
- Prayer of Exorcism
- Giving the Gospels to the candidate
- *Huttamma*, the Sealing prayer

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[47] *Synodal News* 2(February 1994)93-106

[48] *Synodal News* 2(February 1994)107-114

[49] The Malayalam draft gives the title as Baptism of Adults.

Part II: Instruction and Learning

(Begins on the *Bema*)

- Announcement
- Questions and answers
- Priestly prayer
- *Psalm* 23 with *Ps* 42:1 as *qanona*
- Priestly prayer
- Prayer of Exorcism
- Priestly prayer
- Announcement
- 4 Readings:
    - *Deut* 6: 1-7
    - *Is* 62: 1-5
    - *Gal* 4: 4-7
    - *Mt* 16: 13-18
- Homily
- *Karozutha*, the Proclamation prayer
- Announcement of the Deacon
- Symbol of faith
- Giving the Cross to the candidate
- *Huttamma*, the Sealing prayer

Part III: Lord's Prayer and Pre-Baptismal Anointing

(Begins on the *Bema*)

- Announcement of the Deacon
- Questions and answers
- *Psalm* 42 with *Jn* 7:37 as *qanona*
- Priestly prayer
- 4 Readings:
    - *Gen* 12: 1-4 or *Ex* 14: 21-25
    - *Is* 61: 1-3, 6: 8-9
    - *Eph* 4: 5-6
    - *Mt* 6: 9-19 on Lord's prayer
- Homily

- *Karozutha*, the Proclamation prayer
- Priestly prayer
- Imposition of hand and prayer
- Procession to the Baptistery not mentioned
- Consecration of oil
- Anointing with the oil
- *Huttamma*, the Sealing prayer

Part IV: Baptismal Washing or Immersion, Imposition of hands and Anointing with *Myron* and Communion[50]

(Begins on the *Bema*)

- Announcement of the Deacon
- Questions and answers
- Angels' hymn
- The Lord's prayer
- Priestly prayer
- *Psalm* 104 partially with *Lk* 10: 21 as *qanona*
- Priestly prayer
- Resurrection hymn
- Priestly prayer
- *Trisagion*
- Priestly prayer
- OT Readings:
    - *Ex* 17: 3-7
    - *Ez* 36: 24-28
- *Surraya*, the Responsorial hymn
- Priestly prayer
- Epistle: *Rom* 6: 3-5
- *Zummara*, the *Halleluia* hymn
- Gospel proclamation: *Lk* 4: 16-22

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[50] The Malayalam draft gives the title as Baptism.

- Homily
- *Karozutha*, the Proclamation prayer
- Priestly prayer
- Procession to the Baptistery
- Announcement of the Deacon
- Priest's prayer for himself
- Consecration of water
- Baptismal Washing or Immersion
- Announcement of the Deacon
- Hymn to the Holy Spirit
- Imposition of hands and prayer
- Anointing with holy *Myron*
- Priestly prayer
- Procession to the entrance of the Sanctuary
- A special hymn is sung during the procession
- Eucharistic celebration from *Onitha d-Raze*, the Anthem of the Mysteries
- Communion
- Giving of the Bible and lighted candle
- Prayers for help
- *Huttamma*, the Sealing prayer

Baptism of Infants

- Begins at the entrance of the church
- Angels' hymn
- The Lord's prayer
- Priestly prayer
- *Psalm* 42 partially with *Jn* 3:5 as *qanona*
- Imposition of hand and prayer
- Questions and answers
- Procession to the *bema*
- During the procession they sing *Ps* 84
- Priestly prayer

- Resurrection hymn with *Ps* 29: 3 as the versicle
- Priestly prayer
- *Trisagion*
- Priestly prayer
- OT Readings:
    - *Gen* 12: 1-4
    - *Ez* 36: 24-28
- *Surraya*, the Responsorial hymn
- Epistle: *Rom* 6: 3-11
- *Zummara*, the *Halleluia* hymn
- Gospel Proclamation: *Jn* 3: 1-8
- Homily
- *Karozutha*, the Proclamation prayer
- Priestly prayer
- Symbol of faith
- Procession to the Baptistery
- Announcement of the Deacon
- Priest's prayer for himself
- Consecration of oil and water
- Anointing with the oil
- Washing with or Immersion in Water
- Putting on White Dress
- Giving of lighted candle
- Announcement of the Deacon
- Hymn to the Holy Spirit
- Imposition of hand and prayer
- Anointing with holy *Myron*
- Prayers for help
- Procession to the entrance of the Sanctuary
- A special hymn during the procession
- Lord's prayer
- *Huttamma*, the Sealing prayer

Second Sacrament, i.e., the Mystery of Perfection[51]

- Begins on the *bema*, not specially mentioned
- Angels' hymn
- The Lord's prayer
- Priestly prayer
- *Psalm* 104 partially with *Lk* 10:21 as *qanona*
- Priestly prayer
- Resurrection hymn with *Ps* 104:30 as the versicle
- Priestly prayer
- *Trisagion*
- Priestly prayer
- OT Readings:
    - *Num* 11: 16-17
    - *Is* 11: 1-4
- *Surraya*, the Responsorial hymn
- Epistle: *Acts* 1: 3-8
- *Zummara*, the *Halleluia* hymn
- Gospel Proclamation: *Lk* 4: 16-22
- Homily
- *Karozutha*, the Proclamation prayer
- Priestly prayer
- Questions and answers
- Symbol of faith
- Hymn to the Holy Spirit
- Priest's prayer for himself
- Imposition of hand and prayer
- Anointing with the holy *Myron*
- Priestly prayer
- Eucharistic celebration from *Onitha d-Raze*, the Anthem of the Mysteries
- Communion

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[51] The Malayalam draft gives the title as Rite of Confirmation.

- Giving of the Bible and lighted Candle
- Prayers for help
- *Huttamma*, the Sealing prayer

Recent Developments

The orders of the Mysteries of Initiation were sent to Rome for approval on November 25, 1997 as Prot. N. 783/97. The Congregation for Eastern Churches made a thorough study of the orders and sent a letter on March 31, 2000 as Prot. N. 200/93 to Mar Varkey Vithayathil C.Ss.R., the Major Archbishop, with its observations and decisions. Accordingly, the Congregation for Eastern Churches contemplates an authentic growth of the Syro-Malabar tradition from its own most ancient roots.

Hence the document asks the Syro-Malabar Bishops' Synod to include rubrics in the orders of the Mysteries of Initiation to bless the oil and water for baptism during the celebration itself. Only in very emergency situations exceptions are permitted. The anointing and immersion formulas are to be made in the passive form to suit the eastern traditions and their theology. Baptism by immersion is to be made the usual style of celebration: "Baptism is to be conferred by immersing the child in the water thrice, at the name of each Person of the Holy Trinity. Or else the child may be made to sit...poured on the child's head thrice, at each mention of one of the three persons of the Holy Trinity".

The proper East Syrian response of the *Karozutha I*, "Lord, have mercy", is to be restored and the *Karozutha II* of the *Qurbana* celebration is to be added.

The Eastern term "Chrismation" is to be used always to mention the second Sacrament and not the Roman term "Confirmation" (Note: In fact, Chrismation is a Byzantine term and the East Syrians are to use the Syriac expression "Mystery of Perfection" – the author).

"After Chrismation, the ancient and traditional crowning could be suitably restored, with the traditional formula or some variant considered suitable to both the Biblical themes of the newly-baptized as bridegroom (bride) baptized into Christ, the heavenly bridegroom (*Mt* 25: 1-13), ...and Indian culture. The traditional formula is: "May the crown of (Name) be unto joy and exultation, and for days of rejoicing, now and for ever and ever. Amen".

The document asks to include communion under both species after baptismal immersion and anointing with the holy *Myron*, as obligatory. "In the case of an infant too small to consume even a small particle of the consecrated Body of Christ intincted in the Precious Blood, Holy Communion may be administered by the priest dipping a communion

spoon or the index finger of his right hand into the Precious Blood and moistening the infant's tongue with it".

For the Baptism of adults, the document recommends immersion in "living water", i.e., in a river. "Indeed, one should envisage the construction of suitable baptisteries, at least in cathedral churches, to permit the baptism of adults by immersion, as has already been done since Vatican II in numerous Latin Rite churches in the West".

The document also asks the Syro-Malabar Bishops' Synod to redraft the first three stages of the order of baptism for adults in such a way that they begin with the usual opening elements of Syro-Malabar liturgical celebrations (e.g., "Glory to God in the highest...", etc.), but without the usual "Our Father". The first stage may conclude with a procession to the closed door of the baptistery with a chant where the theme of opening the doors of salvation is included. The first question at the beginning of stage one may be: "What is your name?" "Then if new Christian names are to be given to the candidates who already have non-Christian names, the celebrant might respond to the candidate's reply with "You shall henceforth be called N" – of course only after having heard beforehand from the candidates themselves what Christian names they wish to choose".

As the document makes it clear, "Nothing is said in a separate way concerning the proposed Rite of Confirmation, because no such rite *separate from the other rites of Christian Initiation* exists – nor will one be allowed to exist – in the authentic traditions of the Catholic East. Chrismation may be administered separately *only* when some emergency, unusual, or abusive and anomalous situation requires that Chrismation be "supplied" to a candidate who should have received the sacrament at Baptism but did not. In such cases the sacrament is administered as indicated above about Initiation of Infants/Adults, omitting whatever pertains exclusively to Baptism, and always including the reception of the Eucharist under both species, as already indicated".

Canon Law and the Mysteries of Initiation

Canons 675-717 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches speak about the nature and celebration of the Mysteries of Baptism, Chrismation and Eucharist. The *Instruction* of the Congregation for Eastern Churches (January 6, 1996) *for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* gives some basic directions for the celebration of these Mysteries. We give here below some of those directions.

The Importance of Preparation[52]

Baptism is a sacrament granted to those who believe and want to adhere to Christ. All Christian rituals, Eastern as well as Western, prescribe that prior to administering it, a preparation is required in which both the journey of the candidate toward the Lord and – immediately before the baptism – his or her adhesion to Christ and corresponding renunciation of Satan and forces of evil are expressed. Of prime example are the baptismal homilies of Saint John Chrisostom or of his contemporary, Mar Theodore of Mopsuestia, which emphasize the urgency of this dimension of initiation into the mysteries of Christ.

The ritual formula that expresses this attitude must correspond to the actual dispositions of the candidates, either of their own persons in the case of adults, or of those who assume the responsibility and will ensure a Christian education in the case of infants.

Corresponding to the same concern, "according to the most ancient tradition of the Churches the person who is to be baptized should have at least one sponsor", who has the obligation to present the candidate and make efforts such that, after Initiation, the baptized person may be ready to "lead a Christian life in harmony with Baptism and to fulfill faithfully the obligations connected with it" (can. 684).

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[52] *Instruction*, n. 44

To guarantee all this, can. 686 # 2 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches underscores the requirement of a congruent preparation when it states: "The pastor is to see that the parents of the infant to be baptized and those who are given the function of sponsor, be instructed as to the meaning of this sacrament and the obligations connected with it and that they are prepared for an appropriate celebration of the sacrament". It would also be beneficial to become informed about the solutions that other Churches have adopted in order to guarantee the seriousness of the conversion required by Christian Initiation

To Distinguish the Phases of the Rite of Baptism[53]

Christian Initiation is a process of conversion, punctuated by some ritual moments which realize the wise pedagogy of salvation.

Today, in the majority of cases, the baptismal rite is celebrated together with the rites which prepare for it. It is precisely the nature of the progression of the itinerary of conversion which makes it beneficial to restore the ancient distinction in time between the preparatory part and that of the true and proper baptismal celebration. Re-establishing this separation will be even more meaningful when it concerns the Baptism of adults.

The Minister of Baptism[54]

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[53] *Instruction*, n. 45
[54] *Instruction*, n. 46

Differing from the Latin tradition reiterated in can. 861 # 1 of the Code of Canon Law, the ordinary administration of Baptism in all Eastern traditions, as referred to in the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches can. 677 # 1, is reserved to those who are clothed in priestly grace, that is, to bishops and presbyters, excluding deacons, on whom hands have been imposed "not unto the priesthood, but unto the ministry".

In case of necessity rather, according to can. 677 # 2, baptism can also be licitly administered by the deacon, another cleric, members of institutes of consecrated life, and also "any other Christian faithful", but not just "any person with the right intention" as is indicated for the Latin Church in can. 861 # 2 of the Code of Canon Law. Such differentiation underlines that Baptism saves the individual introducing him or her into an ecclesiastical community. Therefore, only a member of the community can baptize.

The insertion into the ecclesiastical community also appears in the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches when it affirms that "its administration is the competence (...) of the proper pastor of the person to be baptized, or another priest with the permission of the same pastor or the local hierarch" (can. 677 # 1) and that "in the territory of another it is not licit for anyone to administer baptism without the required permission" (can. 678 # 1).

Baptism is to be Received in One's own Rite[55]

With the exception of special circumstances, which would have to be authorized by the competent authorities, the practice of requesting Baptism in a rite other than one's own for motives such as esthetics, friendship with the minister, etc. is absolutely discouraged. Except for the case of lacking a minister of one's own rite, the celebration of Baptism should also visibly signify the entrance in one's own Church *sui juris*. For this reason, can. 683 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches states that "Baptism must be celebrated according to the liturgical prescriptions of the Church *sui juris* in which according to the norm of law the person to be baptized is to be enrolled".

The Rite should be Complete and by Immersion[56]

The competent authorities of the different Churches *sui juris* should take care to emanate appropriate directives such that changes or abbreviations are avoided which may be harmful or less expensive of the meaning of the various moments that constitute the rite: the preparatory acts of exorcisms or renunciation of Satan, of blessing the water and oil, of pre-baptismal anointing, and the concluding act of post-baptismal dressing. Many liturgical books provide for the usual administration of Baptism through the rite of triple immersion. Maintained throughout the traditions of the Eastern Churches, it is

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[55] *Instruction*, n. 47
[56] *Instruction*, n. 48

a meaningful and highly expressive rite which is still present and encouraged today in the Western Church, though too often abandoned for simple reasons of convenience. The competent authorities should therefore seek ways to restore it, with prudence but also with zeal.

The Meaning of Chrismation with *Myron*[57]

Chrismation with holy *Myron*, which is discussed by cann. 692-697 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, is the name given in the East to the sacrament which the Code of Canon Law calls Confirmation. Such diverse designations for the same sacrament may correspond to traditional understandings which are substantially identical but diversely accentuated: each, in fact, insists preferably on one aspect and underscores, in the Eastern Churches, the perfect initiation into the mystery of Christ, and, in the Latin Church, the capacity acquired by the individual's testimony of his or her faith.

Can. 692 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, according to Eastern traditions, does not require that the anointing be done by the imposition of hand, differing from the prescriptions of the Latin liturgy.

The Minister of Chrismation[58]

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[57] *Instruction*, n. 49
[58] *Instruction*, n. 50

Can. 694 affirms that "according to the tradition of the Eastern Churches, chrismation with holy *Myron* is administered by a presbyter either in conjunction with baptism or separately", and can. 696 # 1 specifies that "all presbyters of the Eastern Churches can validly administer this sacrament either along with baptism or separately to all the Christian faithful of any Church *sui juris* including the Latin Church".

Eastern presbyters are to use their faculty of chrismating the Latin faithful with great discretion and contacting, as much as possible, the competent Hierarchs of that Church. In fact, Confirmation in the Latin Church is usually administered to children separately and at the end of a developed catechesis which in itself is a part of Christian Initiation. To chrismate the Latin faithful who have not received this formation risks damaging the organic whole of the Christian Initiation used in the Latin Church.

The Eastern practice differentiates itself from the Latin one, expressed in can. 882 of the Code of Canon Law which declares that "the ordinary minister of Confirmation is the bishop", even if a presbyter can administer it when he is provided this faculty "by virtue of either the common law or a special concession of competent authority". Born under different circumstances, the Latin legislation gives emphasis to the principle, pronounced by Ignatius of Antioch, of the necessary unity of the Church and of the presbytery around the Bishop. In the Eastern tradition this aspect is represented by the consecration of the holy *Myron* which is reserved to only the Bishop or, according to the norms of the particular

law, also to only the Patriarch, who celebrates this consecration with great solemnity. Such attribution to the Patriarch indicates the bond of communion existing, beyond every individual eparchy, within the Churches *sui juris*. May these ancient traditions, in this regard, be faithfully preserved.

Communion to the Neophytes[59]

Can. 697 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches prescribes that the Eucharist be administered as soon as possible after the Baptism and Chrismation with holy *Myron*, according to the norms of the Church *sui juris*. Can. 710 resumes the subject of participation of baptized infants in the Eucharist, and exhorts that the prescriptions of the liturgical books of the Church *sui juris* be observed in its administration. This legislation, specific to the Eastern Churches, necessitates some clarification.

For reasons already seen, the norms regarding the Communion to neophytes are not found in the legislation of some Eastern catholic Churches, which have often postponed the first Communion to the school age. Therefore, it will be the task of the competent authorities to adopt measures suitable for returning to the previous practice and to elaborate norms that are more conforming to their own tradition.

As for the prescriptions contained in the liturgical books to the same regard, it should be noted that, in

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[59] *Instruction*, n. 51

the majority of the cases, whether of these or the Churches which preserve the ancient uses, they do not provide sufficient indications, considering that the Ritual of Baptism in general was conceived for adults and subsequently used for children, without introducing any specific modification in the Eastern Churches. The subject is usually addressed in the pastoral manuals for the sacraments. Some practical suggestions could be obtained from the practices of the Orthodox Churches.

Finally, the administration of the Divine Eucharist to infant neophytes is not limited to only the moment of the celebration of Initiation. Eucharist is the Bread of life, and infants need to be nourished constantly, from then on, to grow spiritually. The method of their participation in the Eucharist corresponds to their capacity: they will initially be different from the adults, inevitably less aware and not very rational, but they will progressively develop, through the grace and pedagogy of the sacrament, to grow until "mature manhood, to the extent of the full stature of Christ" (cf. *Eph* 4:13). The sacrament is always a gift which operates efficiently, in different ways just as every person is different. Special celebrations which correspond to the various steps of human growth can possibly be of some use for the pedagogy of faith and to accompany specifically the indispensable catechesis of children and young people, but it must be clear that the initiation into the Mystery of Christ is totally complete upon receiving the first three sacraments.

Chapter 3

THE MYSTERY OF RECONCILIATION

"Reconciliation is a complex biblical term which includes God's invitation and our response to ongoing conversion within a community of faith"[1]. Formerly the terms "Confession" and "Sacrament of Penance" were used as synonyms to this term but with restricted understanding. Reconciliation is considered to be a pastoral extension of the Sacraments of Initiation. Vatican II itself presents this Sacrament in the baptismal context: "By baptism men are brought into the people of God. By the sacrament of penance sinners are reconciled to God and the Church"[2]. In the same way applying the ancient axiom, *lex orandi lex credendi*, (the law of prayer is the law of faith), the Council reasserted the baptismal and penitential character of the Lenten season in its Constitution on Sacred Liturgy[3].

While the Council of Trent in the context of the Reformers, gave a juridical colouring to this Sacrament, the Vatican II in its biblical context gave a quite different explanation: "Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from the mercy of God for offences committed against Him. They are at the same time reconciled with the Church, which they have wounded by their sins, and which by charity, example and prayer seeks their conversion"[4].

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[1] R.A.Duffy, "Reconciliation" in J.A.Komonchak-M.Collins-D.A.Lane (eds.), *The New Dictionary of Theology*, TPI, Bangalore 1993, p. 830
[2] PO 5
[3] SC 109-110
[4] LG 11

The theme of conversion is reasserted in the New Order of Penance, published in 1974: "Thus the people of God becomes in the world a sign of conversion to God. All this the Church expresses in its life and celebrates in the liturgy when the faithful confess that they are sinners and ask pardon of God and of their brothers and sisters. This happens in penitential services, in the proclamation of the Word of God, in prayer, and in the penitential aspects of the eucharistic celebration"[5]. The conciliar theology of penance, while insisting on the personal nature of sin, acknowledges also the ecclesial and social dimensions of both sin and conversion[6].

"In ritualizing this theology, the new Rite provides for the proclamation of the Word of God and prayerful dialogue between the priest and penitent, for communal celebrations with individual confession and absolution, and in certain situations, with general confession and absolution. Penitential celebrations without absolution were also encouraged to deepen the spirit of penance within the Christian community and to assist children and catechumens in preparing for the sacrament"[7].

The New Testament Communities

The New Testament communities were all highly eschatological and aware of their mission to the world as sinless messianic communities. They experienced the gift of salvation as reconciliation with God and the forgiveness of

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[5] *Ordo Paenitentiae*, Vatican City, 1974, p. 11
[6] *Ordo Paenitentiae*, pp. 11-12
[7] R.A.Duffy, "Reconciliation", p. 831

sins. A typical example of this early kerygma is given in *St. Luke* 24, 46-48: "Thus it is written that the *Messiah* must suffer and rise from the dead on the third day. In his name, penance for the remission of sins is to be preached to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of this". St. Paul repeats it in his second letter to the *Corinthians* 5, 14-21.

As the eschatological intensity lessened and people began to solve the problems of long term life of the Gospel, naturally they began to consider the situation of post-baptismal sins. "A general principle seems to be that sinners are to be corrected and helped, sin is to be prevented, and obdurate sinners are to be excluded until they reform"[8]. The New Testament even considers mutual confession and forgiveness as normal in Christian communities (*Mt* 5, 23-24; *Jas* 5,16).

Similarly the ecclesial nature of individual's sin was always considered in excluding the individual from the community until his/her conversion. The NT also considers it impossible the conversion of a baptized sinner: "For when men have once been enlightened and have tasted the heavenly gift and become sharers in the Holy Spirit, when they have tasted the good Word of God and powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to make them repent again, since they are crucifying the Son of God for themselves and holding him up to contempt" (*Heb* 6,4-6).

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[8] R.A.Duffy, "Reconciliation", p. 832

Canonical Penance

The conversion at baptism was considered by the early Church so seriously that it could not think of a relapse and a second conversion. It is with great reluctance that Shepherd of Hermas (2nd cent.) speak of the possibility of one's repentance after baptism. Slowly it became the norm in the Church. Several characteristics are noted for this canonical penance. First, it involves an excommunication, at least from the Eucharist. Second, the seriousness of the sin is considered. Although the nature of this penance varied from place to place, never it was administered privately. It was always an ecclesial act. Prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and the reception of the Eucharist seem to have been the normal remedies for the daily sins of Christians. Third, the penitential process took the form of catechumenal preparation, reintegrating the individual into the liturgical life of the community. And finally, the reconciliation with the Church was never considered to be an end to the penitential practices.

Historically, this canonical penance became a practice delayed to the moment of death.

Irish Tax Penance

The Irish Church took the form of a monastic Church. Monastic spirituality and practices influenced it to a great extent. It was not at all affected by the canonical penance.

The Irish monks used to confess their state of soul to a confrere or to their abbot. They used to have also the communal confession of their faults in the monastic chapters. Then they were assigned a penance. After completing the penance they return to the abbot to get absolution. In the course of time such hearing of confession began to be reserved to the priests only. "This monastic form of penance was eventually extended to the lay people to whom the monks ministered. After confessing the specific nature and number of their sins, the penitent received a penance determined by the gravity of sins confessed. Upon receiving assurance that the penance would be performed (...), the confessor then gave a declaratory absolution (in contrast to the usually deprecatory formula of canonical penance). This new form of penance was eventually brought to the continent by the Irish monks and, although initially rejected, quickly replaced the vestiges of canonical penance"[9].

According to R.A.Duffy there are some striking differences between Canonical and Irish Tax Penance. They are: "First, the canonical form is generally unrepeatable while the Irish form is not. Second, the ecclesial nature of sin and reconciliation is much more sharply emphasized in canonical than in Irish penance. Third, the canonical form encourages a long-term view of conversion while Irish penance subtly fosters a short-range conception. Fourth, the penitential acts and the reception of personal absolution in the Irish practice are emphasized in contrast to the communal liturgical intercession and ecclesial reconciliation of canonical penance. Finally, and most importantly, the role of the minister of reconciliation is transformed from the patristic

[9] R.A.Duffy, "Reconciliation", pp. 833-834

notion of 'medicus' (doctor/ healer) to that of 'judex' (judge)"[10].

The Irish tax penance, however, was more convenient and pastorally effective. It was in fact a form of social control as well as a spiritual discipline. Thus it became more acceptable to the Christian faithful.

The Theology of Penance

The theology of penance developed mostly during the middle ages. It was then that this was fixed as one of the seven sacraments. The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 in its canon 1 decreed penance to be one of the seven sacraments. In this context the theologians began to speak about the matter and form of this sacrament. According to St. Thomas Aquinas contrition, confession and satisfaction form the matter of this sacrament, while the absolution words of the priest are considered to be the form.

The modern and especially the post-conciliar understanding of the sacrament of penance include both the personal and ecclesial dimensions of sin and reconciliation. "The celebration of this sacrament is thus always an act in which the Church proclaims its faith, gives thanks to God for the freedom with which Christ has made us free, and offers its life as a spiritual sacrifice in praise of God's glory, as it hastens to meet the Lord Jesus"[11].

The Liturgy of the Word is restored to the ritual celebration of Reconciliation. This points to the ongoing

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[10] R.A.Duffy, "Reconciliation", p. 834
[11] *Ordo Paenitentiae*, p. 14

evangelization in the Christian community, where the Word of God is more deeply understood and heartfelt assent is given to it. The new Ordo encourages the penitents to co-operate in the selection of the biblical passages and if possible, by reading them by themselves.

The celebration in community of the sacrament of Reconciliation expresses clearly the ecclesial nature of penance. The Christian conscience and conviction that everybody participates in the injustice of individual sin is made clearer through such community celebration of penance.

The sacraments of Initiation always demand for an unceasing conversion, a stable mentality of being redeemed. This argues for the necessity of the sacrament of Reconciliation. It is in fact the ecclesial proclamation of this stable and continued mentality of being redeemed by the person of Jesus Christ. The new Order of Penance expresses it in the following words of Pope Paul VI: "This is a profound change of the whole person by which one begins to consider, judge, and arrange his life according to the holiness and love of God, made manifest in His Son in the last days and given to us in abundance"[12].

Reconciliation and the Thomas Christians

The vast majority in Europe and not a few in India are still the victims of the Portuguese propaganda that it was due to their efforts the Sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation was introduced into the Church of St. Thomas in India. Against the background of the New *Ordo Paenitentiae* for

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[12] *Ordo Paenitentiae*, p. 12

the Latin Church, published in 1974, a re-consideration of the rite of Penance the Thomas Christians[13] have, is very relevant.

They have at present: (1) the private confession and absolution as the Latin Church does have, (2) the penitential rites within their everyday Eucharistic Liturgy, and (3) the annual rite of genuflection in the Pentecostal *Qurbana*. Here we would like to make a short historical and theological review of these rites.

1. The Rite of Private Confession and Absolution

The Thomas Christians were always following the East Syriac liturgical tradition. Thus they depended heavily on East Syriac Fathers for their understanding of sin and reconciliation. But they had their own contribution in the manner of celebrating the reconciliation. Mar Mathew Anikuzhikattil gives a detailed description of the East Syriac practice of this Mystery of Reconciliation in his doctoral dissertation, *Ecclesial Response to the Negativity in Human Life*[14]. He gives also a summary version of it in his article, "Reconciliation"[15]

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[13] Thomas Christians are the most ancient Christians of India who have their home and habitat in Malabar, the South-West coast of India, today known as Kerala. They hail the Apostle St.Thomas as the one who converted their forefathers to Christianity. Formerly there were Thomas Christians in other parts of India and also outside. Their place is now taken by emigrant Thomas Christians from Malabar or Kerala. These immigrants also look to Kerala as their home. For further details cf. Placid J. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, Bombay 1970.

[14] Kottayam: OIRSI, 1996, pp. 306-332

[15] In A.G.Kollamparampil-J.Perumthottam (eds.), *Bride at the Feet of the Bridegroom*, Changanassery: HIRS Publications 1977, pp. 357-366.

Even at the time of Mar Aphrahates (+345), there was explicit practice of private confession and absolution in the East Syriac or Chaldeo-Indian tradition. "According to the teaching of Aphrahates, the physicians of souls are endowed with the power of healing the spiritual wounds of sinners. If the sinner wants to be cured of his wounds and to live, he has to show them to the physician of souls and apply the remedy prescribed by him, who in turn is obliged to keep the secret of the things revealed to him. The result is the forgiveness of sins by God"[16].

The Thomas Christians practised private confession and absolution in their own way: "The private confession among them was known as "*Pizhamoolal*" in the vernacular of St. Thomas Christians. This word is often used in the decrees of the Diamper Synod in the place of "*Kumbasaram*". The mode of celebration is as follows. The sinner approaches the priest and prostrates before him. Then the sinner makes a general self-accusation and a plea for forgiveness. He remains there by beating on his chest with remorse. Then the priest questions the penitent on the commandments and precepts of the Church. When certain questions affect the penitent, he would raise a "Um-Hu" sound, indicating his consent on the culpability. The priest decides specific penance and reconciliation was granted immediately only when there are no other penitents. Otherwise absolution service was always communitarian celebration. The penance was prescribed by the priest for secret and grave sins. Normally for ordinary and daily sins the people themselves were doing penance as fasting, prayer and acts of charity before participating in the Eucharistic

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[16] M. Anikuzhikattil, *Ecclesial Response to the Negativity in Human Life*, pp. 313-314.

celebration and Eucharistic penitential service before the communion"[17]

From the documents we have, it seems that there was no obligatory private confession for the Thomas Christians till the 16th century. What they had was the rite of general confession and absolution. Besides, each one would have been free to confess his own sins and to receive personal direction and absolution directly from any priest. This is even today the practice of non-Catholic East Syrian Churches. The decrees of the so-called Synod of Diamper itself point to this practice of the Church of St. Thomas[18].

Msgr. Ros, the first Latin bishop of the Thomas Christians, says that the Sacrament of Confession was introduced among the Thomas Christians by Mar Jacob (1502-1552), and for that he translated the Latin formula for private confession and absolution into East Syriac or Chaldaic. His successor Mar Joseph (+1569), however, made a better translation of the same formula[19]. Dionysio, the Rector of the Cochin College, and another Jesuit priest, Carneiro, deny the existence of this sacrament among the Thomas Christians until the Portuguese arrival[20]. Further they say that confession among them was not frequent, and it appeared that some who went to confession did so because of

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[17] M. Anikuzhikattil, "Reconciliation", pp. 371-372.

[18] Cf. Synod of Diamper, Actio VI, in *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae in Ecclesiis Africae, Asiae atque Oceaniae Curante Vicecomite de Pavia Manso*, Appendix-Tomus I, Olisipone 1872, pp. 249ff.

[19] G. Schurhammer, *The Malabar Church and Rome During the Early Portuguese Period and Before*, Trichinopoly 1934, p. 22

[20] M.Mundadan, *The St. Thomas Christians of Malabar under Mar Jacob (1498-1552)*, Dissertation for Doctorate in Gregorian University, Rome 1960 (Ms), p. 350

their social contact with the Portuguese. Dionysio wrote in 1578 that earlier, confession among them was not considered necessary and on their deathbeds they received the Eucharist without confessing; but at the time of his writing, confession and communion had been introduced among them. *Historia Serafica* of Soledade remarks that one of the reforms made by the Franciscans was to introduce the Sacrament of Penance among the Thomas Christians[21].

According to Joseph the Indian, the Christians of St. Thomas confessed and communicated as the Latins did and they went to communion three times in the year. Goes says that they went to confession before receiving communion. Penteado was told by the Christians that they had only a general confession and that they confessed to God in a clear voice all together[22].

From a critical analysis of this documentation, it becomes clear that all of these documents point to the same event, namely, the translation and introduction of the Latin formula for private confession and absolution into the Church of St. Thomas. We must not forget here the fact that the Portuguese missionaries could not understand any other rite of reconciliation except the Tridentine form of private confession and absolution. Hence these documents cannot disprove the existence of the Sacrament of Penance among the Thomas Christians.

It was the Syriac translation of the Latin formula introduced by Mar Jacob, revised by Mar Joseph and again retouched by Bishop Ros after the Synod of Diamper, that

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[21] M.Mundadan, *The St. Thomas Christians of Malabar...*, pp. 350-351
[22] A.M.Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, p. 207

was in use among the Thomas Christians till 1968. In this year a new sacramental rite for private confession and absolution was published in Malayalam by the Bishops of the Thomas Christians themselves. Sad to say that it was again a faithful translation of the old *Ordo Paenitentiae* of the Latin Church[23]. Till today they are using it.

2. Penitential Rites within Everyday Eucharistic Liturgy

According to the testimony of the European missionaries, the Thomas Christians used to conduct a special ritual of reconciliation on Sundays. "On Sundays the people gathered in the middle of the church before the altar, around a furnace and they confessed their sins aloud putting incense there in and asked pardon from God and the Church. While doing so, they embraced the smoke with their hands folded in a form of a cross over their chest. When they show repentance and mutual peace, the priest absolved them with priestly prayer"[24]. There is also an incense service at the beginning of the *Qurbana* where the sanctuary, the altar, the nave and the people of God are incensed. By this they proclaim the sanctity of the place of worship and the remission of sins of God's people.

Leaving aside the incense services in the beginning of the *Qurbana*, let us analyze the two substantial penitential services that come between the Epiclesis and the Lord's Prayer before the communion. Franz Nikolasch says that the very position of these rites, i.e., immediately before and after the fraction and consignation, shows the importance given to

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[23] Cf. J.H.Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, Notre Dame 1959, pp. 487-488

[24] M. Anikuzhikattil, "Reconciliation", p. 370.

them[25]. He adds that it is a sufficient reason for not evolving a compulsory rite of private confession and absolution in this Church.

The first of these two rites[26] is underlined with an incense service and it symbolizes the reconciliation between God and man; the second[27], on the other hand, is a call and proclamation of the reconciliation with one's own brothers and sisters, which is a necessary condition for the forgiveness of God (*Mt* 6, 14-15).

The origin of the first rite is still doubtful. In fact, it is not mentioned in the commentary of Narsai (6th cent.). Abraham Bar Lipheh (7th cent.) and Mar Abd-Isho speak of incense burned from the beginning to the end of the *Anaphora*. Shall this be a hint to this rite?

It begins with a prayer addressed to Christ, the peace of heaven and earth. It is, in fact, a resume or summary of the theology of St. Paul in the captivity Epistles, namely, peace is the fruit of redemption from sins and reconciliation of the whole universe to God[28]. The peace so established by Christ is to be diffused to all men through the sacrifice on the altar.

Immediately after this prayer to Christ, the celebrant recites consecutively a few verses from the penitential *Psalms* 51 (*miserere*) and 122 (To Thee I lift up my eyes, O

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[25] *Concilium*, An International Review of Theology (Eng.), 7/1(1971)71
[26] *Thaksa d'Quddasa* (Syriac), Alwaye 1960, pp. 35-37
[27] *Thaksa d'Quddasa*, pp. 40-43
[28] L. Ligier, *Introduzione alla Liturgia Orientale della Penitenza*, Roma 1968, p. 196

Lord) one after another[29]. Then one of the deacons brings the thurible and the celebrant blesses it with a prayer for its acceptance before God as the incense of Aron, the high priest. The following incense service is something particular to the Thomas Christians. With the Assyro-Chaldeans and the non-Catholic East Syrians only the celebrant is incensed with a prayer for the remission of his own sins[30]. But with the Syro-Malabarians the celebrant, the deacon, the assembly, and finally the altar and the *Qurbana*[31] itself are being incensed. This seems to be an independent development among the Thomas Christians of India. There is no document which points to its origin. It is printed, however, in the first printed Missal of this Church (Roma 1774).

The gesture of the celebrant while incensing the altar and the *Qurbana*, together with the prayer, reveals the meaning of the whole rite[32]. Extending the incense to the altar and the *Qurbana* with his hands the celebrant prays: "O Lord, our God, make this altar fragrant, set up in the likeness of the sepulchre of our Lord, and the throne of His propitiatory body and blood"[33]. In fact, the propitiatory character symbolized by the incense does not pertain to itself, but it is the mercy of God that joins it to the priestly hands of the celebrant thanks to the sacrifice of Christ[34]. Special importance is to be given to the fact that the altar and the

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[29] In the present Eucharistic text of the Syro-Malabarians these Psalms are given as optional to chose between.

[30] *La Messa Caldea detta "Degli Apostoli"*, Roma 1948, pp. 40-41; *Thaksa d-Quddase*, the Eucharistic text of the Nestorians of Trissur, Trissur 1959, pp. 69-71

[31] Qurbana is the term under which the whole Eucharistic celebration is called in the Syro-Malabar Church.

[32] L. Ligier, *Introduzione...*, p. 198

[33] *Thaksa d'Quddasa*, p. 37

[34] L. Ligier, *Introduzione...*, p. 198

Qurbana are incensed even after the *Epiclesis*. It is from the altar that the remission of sins, merited by the sacrifice of Christ, is to flow as if from a fountain. Hence the gesture of the celebrant, i.e., extending his hands on the deacon and the assembly, signifies that the sin remitting effects of the sacrifice are conferred on them as Eucharistic grace. In short, this rite of incense symbolizes the propitiatory effects of Eucharistic sacrifice, and this is one of the predominant characteristics of the *Qurbana* of the Thomas Christians. The phrases, "Body which is broken...for the forgiveness of sins", "Blood...which is shed...for the forgiveness of sins", or similar ones with the same idea, are repeated more than 23 times in the *Qurbana* of the Thomas Christians. The formula for distributing the divine Mystery to the faithful is greatly revealing: "The Body/Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ to (so and so) for the remission of sins"[35].

The second part of the rite of reconciliation immediately follows the fraction and consignation. It begins with a personal prayer of the celebrant, followed by the wish of grace of our Lord (2 *Cor* 13,14) on the people. The personal prayer of the celebrant with his gesture immediately before it, i.e., signing himself with cross sign on the forehead, reveals an ancient practice of the East Syriac Churches. The prayer is as follows: "Glory be to you, our Lord Jesus Christ, for, though I am unworthy, you have in your grace appointed me a minister and mediator of your holy, glorious, life-giving and divine mysteries. In your loving kindness make me worthy of the pardon of offences and the forgiveness of sins. Amen"[36]. During the most solemn celebration of the *Qurbana* (*Raza*), the deacons are also signed by the celebrant

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[35] *Thaksa d'Quddasa*, pp. 47-48

[36] *Thaksa d'Quddasa*, p. 40

after he has signed himself[37]. It seems to be a reminiscent of the "Rite of Atonement", used for the reconciliation of apostates during the early centuries. But the same rite was used also for the reconciliation of other sinners. The rite, according to Isho-Yahb III (+658), consists of a prayer of imposition of hands and an anointing with oil. It preceded the communion, so that the reconciled could receive communion. The prayer, which we have just quoted, and the signing of the celebrant stand as symbol of the forgiveness of the whole assembly. This becomes clear when we think of the deacons and the celebrant at the altar as mediators between God and the assembly.

The origin of the deacon's proclamation and the dialogue between deacon and the assembly goes back at least to the 7th century. The anonymous author of the *Expositio Officiorum* attributes it to Patriarch Isho-Yahb III. If we can admit with R.H.Connolly the authenticity of the 17th homily[38], the origin goes back to its author Narsai (5th cent.). The whole text as such is commented on in this Homily.

The deacon's proclamation consists of an invitation to approach the holy mysteries with renewed faith in the passion, resurrection and ascension of Christ, and a reminder to prepare themselves for it with great contrition of sins. The dialogue itself is a petition to God for remission of sins proposing to Him their amity among themselves. The priest who had already at the beginning rendered thanks to God for the salvation of men, now turns out to be the true mediator – having seen that his flock has been already reconciled with God and with one another, he asks for the pardon of their

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[37] *Ordo celebrationis "Quddasa"*, Romae 1959, n. 84, p. 37
[38] R.H.Connolly, *Penitence et Eucharistie en Orient*, p. 26

sins: "In your compassion, O Lord, forgive the sins and offences of your servants, and sanctify our lips by your grace, that we may bring forth fruits of glory for your exalted Divinity with all the saints in your kingdom"[39]. This reminds us of the words in *Expositio Officiorum*: "Our God is merciful and prone to pardon; let us ask His mercy; and before we ask pardon of our offences, let us pardon the offences of our brothers; when we have done what we can, then He pardons all our sins and defects"[40]. Now, when they are reconciled with God and with each other, they can sing together in one accord the beautiful prayer of 'Our Father', the prayer of the community.

The early Church had no idea of the sacraments as seven and seven only. They did not think of a distinction between matter and form in the sacrament itself. They had definitely the idea of a community, and that was the Eucharistic community. Anything that was not up to the moral standard of that community, was considered to separate the author from that community. To fix up the norm for this separation, of course, they had recourse to the Old Testament (*Num* 15, 22-31). Once they were separated, the Fathers thought of the means to receive them back to the community. It is from this concept of exclusion and inclusion to the Eucharistic community that the sacrament of reconciliation evolves. Separate rites evolved and developed in the particular Churches according to the genius thereof. The Oriental Churches in general, and the East Syriac Churches in particular (because it developed outside the *limes Romanus*), cannot understand the juridical aspect, given to this sacrament in the Roman Church. For them, the president

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[39] *Thaksa d'Quddasa*, p. 43

[40] *Expositio Officiorum*, trans. R.H.Connolly, Louvain, p. 66

of the Eucharistic community, or anyone authorized by the custom of the community, who receives the penitent back to the Church, must be like the father in the parable of the prodigal son. It is not a sacrament of judgement for them, but one of salvation.

The *Instruction* of the Congregation for Eastern Churches (January 6, 1996) *for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* asks for a revival of the communitarian value ascribed to this sacrament of Reconciliation in each Church: "Individual confession is contained within a context that is by its nature exquisitely ecclesial and thus communitarian, first of all because reconciliation with God is also reconciliation with the Church. Moreover, in all the Eastern Churches, the sacrament is traditionally administered in a framework of prayers, declarations, admonitions and absolutions, which can praiseworthily be celebrated by an assembly of faithful. Such practice is suggested, at least indirectly, when the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches affirms that the proper place of its celebration is the church and corresponds to the Eastern traditional usage of celebrating it not in a confessional similar to that used in the Latin Church but in the same sacred building and, in some traditions, in front of an icon of Christ. It will be the task of the authorities of the individual Churches *sui juris* to attentively examine their liturgical books, even those of the past, to find the formulas which best express the richness of their own traditions in this specific field"[41].

In this connection, I think it will be interesting to have a picture of the rite of general confession and absolution that

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[41] *Instruction*, n. 89

the Thomas Christians had outside the *Qurbana*. They used to admit to the "*Qurbana* of the faithful" only those who were prepared or allowed to receive communion. Hence they had the dismissal service at the end of the "*Qurbana* of the Catechumens"[42]. The non-baptized, the excommunicated, i.e., those who have not yet received the sign of life (*Rusma d'Hayye*) and those who were not prepared to receive the mysteries by any internal reason, were not allowed to come to communion.

The rite of the Thomas Christians was highly latinized in the so-called Synod of Diamper (1599). The Tridentine form of private confession and absolution was imposed on them under obligation[43]. In spite of all these, the rite of general confession and absolution survived among them at least till the end of the 18th century. As a testimony to this, I would like to quote Fr. Paulinus of St. Bartholomeo. He worked among the Thomas Christians in the second half of the 18th century. He writes:

> "All the Syrians (Thomas Christians) formed a sort of Christian republic. All their churches used to join together to defend any one church that is offended. The parish priest with the elders judged all cases and composed all differences among the people. With the knowledge of the Bishop or the missionary (the European priests who were among them) they used to excommunicate the evildoers. Such excommunication was called '*Pallikupurathakkunnu*', i.e., to send out of the church. The excommunicated could not receive the sacrament of confession and

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[42] *Thaksa d'Quddasa*, p. 18

[43] Synod of Diamper, Actio VI, Decree 2-3, *Bullarium...*, p. 253

communion; They would not be given '*casturi*' (*dasturi* = pax) at the end of the Mass; priests would not enter their houses, nor bless their marriages, nor take part in their '*chattams*' (=death anniversary celebration). They had no voice in the community nor could they sit in '*yogam*' (=parish council). But they could hear Mass and speak with others. Before being absolved, the excommunicated had to make satisfaction for the theft, or scandal, or offence, or sin, committed by them. Kneeling at the door of the church on Sunday or Feast day, they had to ask for readmission into the community. Then the '*Cassanari*' (=priests), the '*kaikarer*' (=the trustees) and the '*muppanmar*' (=the elders)[44] examine the case, its circumstances, as well as the economic conditions of the culprits. The rich would be asked to give to the church a certain measure (*ciodana*) of oil, or an umbrella of silk (*koda*), or something pertaining to the Divine Worship. The poor would be asked to stand at the door of the church carrying a big wooden cross or a skull, or they would be asked to walk on their knees in the church, or to go on a pilgrimage to Malayattoor to venerate the cross, supposed to be erected by St. Thomas the Apostle. Women would be asked to carry in their hands a candle or some bones of a dead man. After verifying that the penance imposed was fulfilled the Bishop or the missionary or the parish priest would absolve the penitents *beating*

[44] The priests, the trustees and the elders (i.e., the elders of each family) form the *Palliyogam* or the Parish Council. It was in the power of this *Palliyogam* to judge the cases of excommunication.

them mildly with a small bundle of sticks at the entrance of the church in the presence of all"[45].

In this rite of general confession and absolution, the beating with a small bundle of sticks may be a substitution among the Thomas Christians for the anointing with oil in the rite of atonement according to Isho-Yahb III.

Besides this general confession and absolution outside the *Qurbana*, the penitential rites within the Eucharistic liturgy were also forms of sacramental absolution for them. In the light of the New *Ordo Paenitentiae* for the Latin Church, it seems to be a practice authentic and sacramental. The third form in the New *ordo Paenitentiae* is the reconciliation of several penitents with general confession and absolution. Its fruitful reception demands: the interior disposition especially conversion, true repentance, the intention to make an individual confession, the willingness to make up for the offences committed and the resolve to renew one's life[46]. Except that the individual confession was optional, all other elements coincide with the penitential rites of the Thomas Christians. The concept of individual confession, however, is one of later origin.

3. The Pentecostal Rite of Genuflection

It seems to be an annual penitential service parallel to the celebration of Yom Kippur among the Jews. This is a rite common to all Oriental Churches. The East Syrians have it in the Pentecostal *Qurbana*, immediately after the *Sancta*

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[45] Paulino da S. Bartolomeo, *Viaggio alle Indie Orientali*, Roma 1796, p. 137

[46] *L'Osservatore Romano*, Feb. 14, 1974, p. 12

Sanctis, i.e., just before the communion[47]. They trace back its origin to the Bible itself, the prayer of our Lord in the garden of Getsemani (*Mt* 26,39; *Mk* 14,35; *Lk* 22,41). All through the centuries the gesture of genuflection was considered to be the symbol of supplicatory and penitential prayer in Christianity.

The Easter season is one of joy and felicitation because of the victory over sin won by our Lord. Genuflection, on the contrary, was always a gesture of penance and servitude. Hence the early Church developed the custom of not kneeling down during the Easter season and on Sundays. This custom was confirmed by canon 20 of the Council of Nicea[48]. This rite in the Eastern Churches, therefore, marks the close of the joyous season of Easter and a return to the penitential acts.

The prayers in this rite emphasize the importance of the power of the Holy Spirit in effecting the conversion of minds. In fact, according to the Scriptures and the Fathers of the Church, the Holy Spirit and conversion go together. Psalm 51 (*miserere*) and the Prophets are unanimous in attributing the power to purify the people and the world to the Spirit of God. This idea is clear from the words of our Lord Himself: "Receive the Holy Spirit; if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven..." (*Jn* 20,22-23). Hence we see the unification of this rite with the feast of Pentecost.

For the Thomas Christians, since they had been following the East Syriac Rite in everything, till the

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[47] *Breviarium juxta Ritum Syrorum Orientalium, id est Chaldaeorum* (Syriac), Vol. 3, pp. 75-82

[48] L.Ligier, *Introduzione...*, p. 207

intervention of the Portuguese missionaries, this rite might have been in force among them. Afterwards, nobody seems to have thought about this rite. Let us hope a prompt restoration of this biblical and patristic rite of penitential gesture among them.

This discussion, I hope, has revealed something of the great treasure that lies hidden in the liturgical practices of the Thomas Christians. But they themselves are not aware of it. They have been under the training of the Latin missionaries for more than four centuries. Their clergy is still formed according to the Latin systems. Due to such formation, the laity are far better to some extent than the clergy in matters pertaining to their Rite. What the Church needs most today are specialized hands in its tradition, genius and history. A radical change in the present system of seminary education is an obligation. Because of the lack of emphasis given to their own tradition, genius and history in their seminaries, they are gradually loosing their identity and individuality. Many of them are after the so-called indianisation. It is, in fact, a replica of the 16th century Portuguese cry for latinisation. To my limited experience, no one in Malabar considers the Syrians (Thomas Christians) and their religion as something foreign. They had so perfectly and naturally adapted their religion to the culture and customs of the place[49]. If only

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[49] Cf. Placid J.Podipara, "The Thomas Christians and Adaptation", in *Eastern Churches Review* 3/2(1970)171-177; Cf. Also by the same author, "One Rite for India?", in *Eastern Churches Review*, 2/2(1968)175-179

they can purify their rites and customs from Latin infiltration that happened after the 16th century, they will be more than any one else true Indians.

Chapter 4

THE MYSTERY OF ANOINTING THE SICK

Beginnings

There are only very scanty evidences during the first centuries for the sacrament of anointing the sick. The Epistle of St. James 5: 14-15 is considered to be its biblical foundation. It reads: "Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven". When somebody is sick they are to call the elders of the Church or priests and they are to pray over the sick anointing them with oil. This produces the effect of healing even by pardoning the sins. The Gospel according to St. Mark also gives some hint to this sacrament: "And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them"(6:13).

The *Apostolic Tradition* of St. Hippolytus (c.215) gives a formula for blessing the oil of the sick:

> If anyone offers oil, let him [the bishop] give thanks in the same way as for the offering of bread and wine (not using the same words but expressing the same idea) and say: ""Lord, just as by sanctifying this oil, with which you anointed the kings, priests, and prophets, you give holiness to those who are anointed with it and receive it, so let it bring comfort to those

who taste of it (*gustantibus*) and health to those who use it (*utentibus*)"[1].

In the East Syriac tradition, Mar Aphrahates (+c. 345), while speaking about the use of the holy oil in sacramental mysteries, mentions three kinds of functions: first, the sign of the sacrament of life, namely, the holy baptism; secondly, the restoring of penitents in the holy Eucharist and thirdly, anointing the sick in the sacrament of the sick[2]. Mar Aprem (+373), while speaking on the rites over the sick, says that the priest, if possible several of them together, pray over them, blow on them, and seal them with oil.

The *Euchology of Serapion* (ca. 350) gives two prayers of blessing over the sick persons and one prayer for blessing the oil for the sick. We give here one of the prayers over the sick: "Lord, God of mercies, deign to stretch out your hands: in your kindness, heal all the sick, make them worthy of health, deliver them from their present sickness; in the name of your only begotten Son, grant them recovery; let this holy name be their remedy for health and restoration. Through him, glory to you and power, in the Holy Spirit, now and forever and ever. Amen"[3].

St. John Chrysostom (354-407) in his discussion about the great power of priesthood, speaks also about the power of anointing the sick.

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[1] Quoted in, A.G.Martimort, "Prayer for the Sick and Sacramental Anointing", in A.G.Martimort (ed.), *The Church at Prayer III : The Sacraments*, London 1984, p. 119

[2] W.A.Jurgens, *The Faith of the Fathers* I, Collegeville 1970, p. 306

[3] L. Deiss, *Springtime of Liturgy*, Collegeville 1979, p. 189.

The *Apostolic Constitutions* (4/5 cent.) contains a formula of blessing water and oil, where the bishop, or in his absence, a priest implores the Lord to make these elements "efficacious in producing health, driving out sicknesses, putting demons to flight, and foiling ambushes"[4].

Pope Innocent I in his letter to Decentius of Gubbio (416) speaks about anointing the sick exactly as we understand this sacrament in modern times. For Victor of Antioch (+460) the holy oil is the symbol of cure and it is effected through sacramental anointing.

The *Testament of the Lord*, which originated in Syria (5th cent.) also gives a formula of blessing the oil for the sick:

> Lord God, who have given us the Spirit Paraclete; Lord, saving name that is steadfast and hidden from the foolish but revealed to the prudent; Christ, who have sanctified us and in your mercy have instructed these servants [= the priests] whom you have chosen in your wisdom; you who sent knowledge of your Spirit into us sinners by your holiness when you gave us the gift of the Spirit; you who cure every illness and suffering and have given the gift of healing to those whom you judged worthy of it: send the fullness of your compassion upon this oil, which is an image of your gentleness, so that it may set free those who are suffering, restore the sick to health, and sanctify those who are being converted and coming to faith in you, for you are mighty and to be praised for

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[4] A.G. Martimort, "Prayer for the Sick...", p. 120

ever and ever. *The people are to respond*: Amen. *The same prayer is to be said over the water*[5].

Maclean gives in his *East Syrian Daily Offices* a very ancient prayer which is to be said over the oil of healing. We are not sure of the time of its origin in the East Syriac tradition: "O true Healer, whose word is full of all salves and helps and healing medicines, do thou, O my Lord, make thy loving kindness to dwell in this oil, that it may help and cure all our sicknesses, and relieve our afflictions, and give ease in our distresses, and remedy our pains, and cleanse our wounds, and take away our fevers; and may it be found (effectual) for all salves and helps by the salve which thou hast given us in it, and may we lift up to thy Trinity, which is full of all good things, praise and honour and confession, now and at all times, Lord of all, etc."[6].

"Since the middle ages it has become recognised more explicitly as a sacrament. In the west, as in the east today, it was usual until the 13th cent. for several priests to administer the anointing together, sharing the various anointings among themselves. The anointing of the sick is once more administered immediately after the sacrament of penance, as was the custom until the 17th century. According to the Roman Ritual, penance used to be followed first by viaticum, then by the anointing"[7].

The documents of the middle ages and the Council of Trent conceive this sacrament as the "extreme unction", namely, the sacrament of the dying. It is the merit of the

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[5] A.G.Martimort, "Prayer for the Sick...", P. 119
[6] A. J. Maclean, *East Syrian Daily Offices*, London 1894, p. 251
[7] G. Podhradsky, *New Dictionary of the Liturgy*, London 1967, p. 28

second Vatican Council to have harmonised the two aspects of this sacrament, healing of body and soul, and disposing for final glory.

The main doctrinal points emphasised by various Church documents concerning this sacrament are the following: It is a true sacrament, instituted by Christ and promulgated by St. James. It is administered by an anointing with oil accompanied by a prayer. The minister of the sacrament is always a priest. It is to be received by the faithful who are dangerously ill. The fruit of the sacrament is the strength of the soul and, at times, health of the body. This sacrament can also remit sins[8].

Sickness and Healing

It is a sacrament which can be given only to the seriously sick and the Church always affirms that it has a healing effect on the body. Both the Old and New Testaments give an important place to sickness and its healing. Sickness is very often connected with sin and devil. It is by sin that sickness came to the world (*Gen* 3: 15-19). Hence healing of the sickness can always be a sign of grace to the soul.

Healing, the Sign of the *Messiah*

The healing of the sick is very well a sign of the coming of the *Messiah*: "And he went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity

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[8] Cf. J. Neuner – J. Dupuis (eds), *The Christian Faith*, Bangalore 1978, p. 423

among the people. So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics and paralytics, and he healed them"(*Mt* 4: 23-24).

Jesus himself points to the healing of the sick as a sign to him as the *Messiah*. When John the Baptist sent his disciples to enquire about Jesus, he said: "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is he who takes no offence at me"(*Mt* 11: 4-6).

With the healing of the body Jesus was always giving grace to the soul. There are many examples to this fact in the gospels. The paralytic was first given forgiveness of his sins before he was cured from his illness (*Lk* 5: 18-20). The sick man at the pool of *Bethzatha* for more than thirty-eight years was advised by Jesus after his curing, as follows: "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse befall you"(*Jn* 5:14).

Healing, the Sign of the Kingdom

...All the Gospels refer to the numerous examples of the Lord's active care for the sick, and a reflection by the evangelist Matthew (cf. *Mt* 8:17) helps us to understand its significance: the healing of the sick is fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah (53:4). The Saviour, curing the sick and raising the dead, reveals how he, by the Holy Spirit (cf. *Mt* 12:28), snatches from Satan his evil power over mankind, and restores the Kingdom to the Father (cf. 1 *Cor* 15:24, 28).

As manifestation and sign of the salvation present in the person of Jesus, the curing of the sick is also the task of the Church in the Holy Spirit who extends the work of the Word incarnate. In fact, Christ indicates this when he sends his disciples on mission saying to them: "Cure the sick (...) cleanse lepers" (*Mt* 10:8); or when, before his Ascension, he describes the signs that will accompany those who believe: "In my name (...) they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover" (*Mk* 16:17-18)...[9]

Cures and Signs

Most of the cures were accomplished with some kind of sacred sign. Very often Jesus spoke and it was accomplished. But sometimes he used some kind of signs. He touched or took hold of or laid his hands over the sick and they were cured. Still at other times, he put his fingers in the ears of the deaf-mute and touched his tongue with His saliva (*Mk* 7: 33); He made mud to anoint the eyes of the man born blind (*Jn* 9: 6).

Power of Healing Given to the Apostles

The same power of healing the sick was given to the Apostles when they were sent out to preach the Gospel: "And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover"(*Mk* 16: 17-18).

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[9] *Instruction*, n. 91

Salvific Aspect of Suffering

In the NT context of the suffering, death and Resurrection of Jesus, suffering and sickness have already become salvific as powerful means for meriting the heavenly kingdom. They are means to become like Christ. When Paul wanted to get rid of the sting in his body, the Lord said: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness"(2 *Cor* 12: 9). In his own body Paul was to accomplish "what is lacking in Christ's afflictions"(*Col* 1: 24). Thus Paul could exclaim in full satisfaction: "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies"(2 *Cor* 4: 8-10).

Blessing of the Oil for the Sick

In the Eastern Liturgies, in those that are not under the Latin influence, the oil is usually blessed by the priest immediately before the anointing with it.

But in the Latin Church the blessing of the oil for the sick is reserved to the bishops and it is done usually during the Chrism Mass of Holy Thursday. Exceptions are always possible[10]. In ancient days, also in the Roman Liturgy, no special day was prescribed for the blessing of the oil for the sick. The people used to bring flasks of oil and they were given the blessing at the end of the Canon of the Mass, and this blessing was pronounced both by the bishops and by the

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[10] Canon 999

priests. The prayer used for blessing the oil substantially comes from the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus (c.215).

Up to the ninth century the faithful in the Roman Church used to take the flasks of blessed oil to their homes and apply it to the sick persons in different ways, also giving it to them to drink. In some cases, according to the prescription of the *Epistle of St. James*, the priests used to go to homes and anoint the sick, praying over them. Since the Council of Trent we know sufficiently well that the anointing in this sacrament is strictly reserved to priests only. The formula accompanying the anointings in the Syriac tradition is really interesting: "By this anointing, may your infirmities be relieved, your sins be forgiven, and all evil thoughts be driven away from you, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit unto life everlasting. Amen"[11].

"The ancient rituals surrounded the anointing of the sick with an elaborate liturgy which allowed those present to take an active part in the ceremony. Psalms were generally sung with their antiphons, followed by versicles and prayers. In the west, these prayers were penitential, stressing primarily the remission of sins. In the east, when the sacrament is given solemnly, a real vigil is held, complete with readings from the Bible and hymns. Such lengthy ceremonies would seem to be especially appropriate for monastic communities, or at least for Christian communities of no great size, able to devote considerable time to the rare cases of illness among them. These rites serve to remind us that all sick persons should be aided to the greatest possible extent by the

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[11] A.G. Martimort, *The Signs of the New Covenant*, Collegeville 1963, p. 274

common prayer of the family and even of neighbours and friends"[12].

The formula for anointing and the prayers that follow it emphasize both the penitential aspect and the dimensions of healing and return to normal life together with the glory of eschatological life.

Healing of the Body

St. Caesarius of Arles, the Church Father, who spoke in detail about the anointing of the sick wrote clearly about the healing of the body. In his sermon we read: "When a sickness occurs, let him who is sick receive the Body and Blood of Christ; let him ask the priests, with humility and faith, for the blessed oil, and let him oil his body with it, so that what is written will be fulfilled in him. (the words of St. James is quoted here) You see, my brothers, that the sick person who has recourse to the Church will merit obtaining both health of body and forgiveness for his sins"[13].

Healing of the body is truly an effect proper to this sacrament, though it is a favour which God grants when He sees fit. It does not follow necessarily, but it does occur frequently and gives the sacramental sign its complete signification.

Healing of the Soul

"That the sacrament of the sick also effects the remission of sins is one of the clearest statements in the

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[12] A.G.Martimort, *The Signs of the New Covenant*, p. 274
[13] Sermon 13,3

tradition of the Church. It is found in the Epistle of St. James and in the prayers for blessing and applying the oil. The Council of Trent has made it an article of faith[14]. There is nothing astonishing in this, since we have seen the connection existing in the biblical perspective between sickness and sin, and in the attitude of Christ between healing and forgiving"[15].

But, surely, the sacrament of the anointing of the sick does not stand in the place of the sacrament of penance. Usually the sick person, if capable, should be encouraged to make the confession and receive absolution before receiving the holy oil. Anointing is a "sacrament of the living" which ought to be received in the state of grace.

The penitential effect of the anointing of the sick complements the effect of penance. Sickness is a providential occasion for a more profound discovery of our wretchedness, of which it is both a sign and an effect, and the sacrament of anointing proclaims the compassion of the Lord in a very special way.

Comforting and Strengthening of the Sick

The Council of Trent speaks clearly about the unity and richness of this sacrament of anointing the sick in the following words: "This sacrament is a sign of the grace of the Holy Spirit; it is He whose anointing washes away sins, if there are still any in need of forgiveness, and the consequences of sin, gives comfort and strength to the soul of the sick person, awakening in him great trust in the divine

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[14] *Denzinger* 927

[15] A.G. Martimort, *The Signs of the New Covenant*, p. 277

mercy. Uplifted by this trust, the sick person bears more easily the inconveniences and sufferings of his state, resists more easily the temptations of the devil... and often receives health of body when this is useful for the salvation of his soul"[16].

> The Anointing of the sick is accompanied by prayer for their healing. Its meaning is intrinsically linked with its quality as a sign that expresses the complete healing of the person and the benevolence of the heavenly Father offered to man undermined as he is, in the body as in the soul, by sickness and sin; this healing is the work of Christ, the physician of our souls and bodies. In fact, when he cures the paralytic, he explains to the scribes the meaning of the miracle: "that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" (*Mt* 9:6). The oil with which the sick are anointed thus signifies the spiritual medicine offered by the divine mercy to man afflicted by the countless miseries of life. It is a sacrament of the Church and draws its value from the prayer proclaimed with faith by the Church and the presbyters who represent her. The faith which must accompany the anointing expresses the confidence that the believers have in the Lord who stops at nothing to bring us to his Kingdom and grants our supplications with all that we need so that, participating in his death, we may also partake in his resurrection[17].

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[16] *Denziger* 909
[17] *Instruction*, n. 92

Anointing of the Sick and Christian Death

The sacrament of anointing the sick is in fact a proclamation and celebration of the eschatological dimension of Christian existence. Because of the varying emphasis given to the aspects of this sacrament in the course of its history, we need to have a real catechesis in today's community of faith. Christians have no permanent abode here on earth. They are real pilgrims on their march towards their permanent home, the heavenly kingdom. They are living in between the already and not-yet. Serious illness is a sign, a reminder, of this basic pilgrim character. Hence a conscious acceptance and proclamation of this reality in the context of a sacrament is advised. As far as possible it must be in a communitarian celebration of the sacrament of anointing. It must be announced earlier in the parish so that the faithful also could take part in it. The sacrament ought to be generally administered at the beginning of a serious illness. We know, proclaim and teach that the reception of this sacrament is a very good medicine to any kind of illness – if beneficial to the soul, beneficial also to the body. Pushing the reception of this sacrament to the last moment is denying the possibility of a very good medicine to the sick and is a middle age practice. Second Vatican Council wanted to change its name from "extreme unction" to the "anointing of the sick" precisely because of the changed understanding of this sacrament.

> The Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches strongly recommends the administration of the Anointing to the Sick every time they are gravely ill (can. 738) and indicates that such ministry is reserved only to priests (can. 739 # 1). It then reminds us of the usage in some Eastern Churches to assemble several priests for

its celebration and exhorts that the custom is to be preserved wherever possible (can. 737 # 2). In fact, the concelebration of several priests better expresses the solicitude of the entire ecclesial community toward the sick, to affront and surpass together with him or her the dangers of the soul and the body. As to the liturgical rites to be observed, the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches prescribes that the oil to be used in the sacrament of Anointing the sick must be blessed during the celebration of the sacrament and specifically by the priest administering it, unless the particular law of the Church *sui juris* determines otherwise (can. 741). It also requires that the "words, order and manner of anointing are to be carefully carried out according to the prescriptions of the liturgical books", although "in case of necessity only the anointing with the proper formula suffices" (can. 742)[18].

Thomas Christians of India

It appears that there was no anointing with oil for the sick by the Thomas Christians of India up to the 16th century. When someone was sick, they used to call the priests and they, if possible several of them together, used to come home, pray over the sick, read from the Sacred Scriptures over him/her, attach to the body or keep in the sick-bed, under the pillow, the Word of God written on palm leaves and give the sick *Hanana* to drink. *Hanana* is water in which the soil from the tomb of St. Thomas at Mylapore is dissolved. Marco Polo, the European traveller, in 1293

[18] *Instruction*, n. 93

speaks about this practice of the Thomas Christians[19]. There was the custom of making regular pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Thomas at Mylapore from Kerala and the most precious thing they brought back was the soil from the tomb. It was being preserved in the churches for the purpose of giving it to the sick.

According to the tradition of the Chaldean Church of the Middle East, *Hanana* was prepared with oil, specially blessed for that purpose, and earth taken from the tombs of martyrs and saints. It was made into small balls, dried and preserved in the churches. When somebody was sick, they used to dissolve it in water and give him / her to drink.

The Latin Church too had a custom in the 5th century of giving blessed oil to the sick to drink; and sometimes it was mixed with water and sprinkled over the sick.

A Jesuit missionary, John Mary Campori, while explaining the customs and manners of the Thomas Christians, wrote in 1618: "The St Thomas Christians are in the habit, when sick, to have some passage of the Gospel read over them by the priests, and also to have sentences from the Gospel written down and placed in little gold or silver cylinders or lockets, which they carry tied to their arm, as a remedy against disease and a safeguard against the devils. So that whenever we happened to pass we had much to do to content those who by all means desired to get those little papers. In this Church this task assumed such proportion that we were unable to satisfy everyone. Not only Christians, ... but even pagans entreated us for them.... Our Lord often

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[19] A. Medlycott, *India and the Apostle St Thomas*, London 1905, p. 345

rewards the faith of those who ask for these papers by restoring them to health"[20].

Fr. Campori appears to have written about this custom of the St Thomas Christians as one encouraged also by the European missionaries.

Celebration of this Mystery Today

When somebody is seriously ill, they call the priest and he administers this Mystery according to its order in the book of the Mysteries. The draft text of this Mystery celebration, published by the Syro-Malabar Bishops' Synod[21] is considered in the present context. It is not yet finalized and published for regular use of the community.

According to the general instructions given at the beginning of this draft text, it is advised to begin the celebration of this Mystery with a short explanation of the fact and relevance of anointing the sick. Near the bed of the sick, on a table the Cross and the Bible are set between lighted candles. If it is needed, the priest administers the mystery of Reconciliation first to the sick person. The priest vests himself with the ordinary liturgical vestments or at least the *Urara*, the stole.

As the priest enters the room of the sick, he says: "Peace of the Lord be with you". Then he sprinkles holy water in the room and over the assembled saying: "May Jesus Christ who made us participate in His death and resurrection through our baptism sanctify you".

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[20] D. Ferroli, *The Jesuits in Malabar I*, Bangalore 1939, pp. 418-419
[21] *Synodal News* 3 (May 1994) 52-69

Then he begins the celebration of the Mystery as usual with "Glory to God in the highest" and the Lord's prayer, "Our Father..." according to their order in the Eucharistic text. Then follows the priestly oration: "O merciful Lord, illumine our hearts with the fire of your love. Send your Holy Spirit and console this sick person, suffering from spiritual and bodily vexations. O Lord, who bestows health to the sick, give him/her healing through this celebration of anointing. Make us worthy to celebrate this Mystery with purity of heart and body. Lord of all, forever".

Then they recite or sing psalm 32 with a *qanona*: "Physician is needed not to the healthy but to the sick". An alternative is given with psalm 51 and the *qanona*: "To You, O Lord, I lift up my soul! Let me not be ashamed".

After the psalm comes a priestly oration: "O Christ who was born as light and life to those who were in the shades of darkness and death, shower your mercy on us. We render you thanks for delivering us from the slavery of sin through baptism and making us the children of God and giving us your body and blood as a pre-taste and assurance of the heavenly banquet. Bless this our brother/sister, O You, who healed and consoled the sick, Lord of all, forever".

This is followed by the Resurrection Hymn and *Trisagion* according to the order of the Eucharistic text. *Deuteronomy* 7:15 is selected as the versicle for the Resurrection Hymn. After the *Trisagion* there come two priestly orations in preparation of the Word of God.

For the Epistle, *James* 5:13-16 is given. Two alternatives are given with *Acts* 3:1-10 or *Romans* 8:14-18.

Then follows the Gospel proclamation for which *Matthew* 15:25-31 or *Luke* 7:18-23 is prescribed.

The *Karozutha*, the proclamation prayer comes next. Common as well as particular intentions are proclaimed in this prayer. It is concluded with the following priestly prayer: "O Lord, we praise you who give health to the sick, forgiveness to the sinner and consolation to the afflicted. Accept our prayer for this our brother/sister who is suffering from bodily and mental afflictions. Heal him/her with the touch of your hands. Bless him/her by giving strength and grace to bear gladly the diseases and their pain and to submit to your divine will. Lord of all, forever".

Now comes the blessing of the oil. The formula for the blessing is as follows: "O merciful Lord, who gives healing to the sick, bless this oil by sending your Holy Spirit. Let this be a divine medicine to all our diseases. May this anointing decrease our pain, remove our afflictions, heal our wounds and give health for our bodies and souls. May we be able to render praise and honour, thanks and adoration to the Holy Trinity, Lord of all, forever".

Then follows the imposition of hands over the sick person. Imposing the right hand over the sick, the priest prays: "Let Christ who said to his disciples: 'you impose your hands on the sick and they will be healed', give His healing. May He console you forgiving your sins. May He make your sufferings and afflictions redemptive. May He send His angels to console you. May He bless abundantly your beloved ones and those who nurse you. Now and always and forever".

Next comes the anointing, with an announcement of the meaning of the anointing of the sick. The priest anoints the forehead, eyes, ears, lips, hands and legs with appropriate formulae. For anointing a priest who is sick, separate anointing formulae are given.

After anointing the community sings a hymn where they pray for healing and consolation. Towards the end of that hymn, they request also the help of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Then the sick person is invited to the Holy Communion. Communion is given following its order in the Eucharistic text.

Finally there come two orations for the help of the Saints and then a concluding or sealing prayer with a blessing over the assembled.

The draft gives also a provision for the danger of death and emergency situations. Then the priest may anoint only the forehead with the prayer of the imposition of hands.

Canon Law and Anointing of the Sick

The *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* in cann. 737-742 speaks about the purpose of this sacrament, the way in which it is to be celebrated, the oil of unction, the minister, its ecclesial dimension, frequency of its celebration and to whom it is to be celebrated. The *Instruction* of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches (January 6, 1996) *for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* also in nn. 91-94 speaks about the

meaning of this sacrament, the ways of its celebration and its characteristics in Eastern Liturgies.

> In the Eastern Churches, the celebration of the sacrament of the Anointing of the sick is sometimes rather complex and somewhat prolonged. In reality, this notable duration, different from the brevity of the Western rituals, underscores the mystagogical aspect of prayer which entails contemplation of the wonders of the Lord, proclaimed in various gospel texts, from which strength and consolation are drawn. Supplication is made for the Lord to grant salvation of the body and soul to the sick, as much in the present circumstances as in the end times, when he will render his faithful participants in the fullness of divine life. If conditions require, the authorities of the individual Churches can indicate the parts of the text to be used for celebrations in the house of the sick, when they are gravely ill, or in hospitals. However, it is better for the full formula to be normally used when the sacrament is administered in the church, as already occurs and is recommended, and to many sick people, if possible. In this way, the sacrament maintains its extraordinary catechetical value[22].

Customs Related to Death, Burial and After Burial

The ancient customs and rituals related to death, burial and after burial of the Thomas Christians of India remained unchanged during the missionary period since the missionaries could not understand them and they had no parallels in the Latin or Roman tradition.

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[22] *Instruction*, n. 94

There is a custom not to prepare or eat any food in the house of the dead till the burial is over. Immediately after the burial, in certain areas, the priest used to bless a tender coconut, drink a little of its water and then share it with the nearest relatives to express condolence with them. The Thomas Christians of India used to observe almost all the celebrations after death and burial, which were existing among their Hindu brethren even by their very same names. The presence and prayer of priests, especially the liturgical celebrations connected with each of them distinguish them from the rites of the Hindu brethren.

In several places, immediately after the burial, priests come home and make special prayers, which include also a short formula of house blessing. At the end of the prayer all kiss the cross in the hand of the priest and taste ordinary cumin seed. After the prayers there follows a moderate vegetarian meal. The whole function is called *Naloth* in the local Malayalam language.

The close relatives of the deceased used to observe a certain period of *Pula*, 'defilement' which came to a close with a 'ceremonial bath', the *Pulakuli*. The *Pulakuli* for the *brahmins* among the Hindus is on the 11th day, for the *kshatriyas* on the 13th day, for the *nairs* on the 15th and for all other castes on the 17th day. The Thomas Christians used to observe it on the 11th or on the 13th or on the 15th day. The *Pulakuli* is always followed by a Eucharistic celebration in the church, special prayers for the deceased in the cemetery and house. At the end of the prayers in the cemetery and at home, the participants kiss the cross in the hand of the priest. At home they also offer some money for the rituals of the

deceased and taste ordinary cumin seed. Usually, a vegetarian meal follows.

Very often there is such a remembrance with liturgical celebrations in the church, and special prayers in the cemetery and house on the 41st day as well.

Sradha (Chattam), the first anniversary of the deceased, is very solemnly observed by all the Thomas Christians. Eucharistic celebration in the church, and special prayers for the deceased in the cemetery and house are part of this celebration. At the end of the prayers in the house the participants used to kiss the cross, offer some money for the rituals of the deceased and taste ordinary cumin seed. For the anniversary celebration, they may also serve non-vegetarian meals. The children used to celebrate in a moderate way all the subsequent death anniversaries of their parents.

The Thomas Christians used to prepare some kind of special food and sweets in connection with all such celebrations. They are exactly the same as their high caste Hindu brethren's. *Neyyappam* (bread in ghee), a special sweet prepared with rice flour, black sugar and ghee/coconut oil, used for the anniversary celebration is always brought by the daughters of the deceased.

Besides the celebrations and prayers in the church, cemetery and house, the poor are specially considered on all such occasions. They give alms and feed the poor according to each one's might.

Chapter 5

THE MYSTERY OF PRIESTHOOD

The Priesthood of Christ

Our Lord Jesus Christ, being both God and man, re-established the communication between God and man. He makes us hear God's voice, for He is the Word of God made flesh. Having ascended into heaven in His human nature with His risen body, He has become our advocate before God the Father, appearing "in the presence of God on our behalf" (*Heb* 9: 24) and presenting Him with a sacrifice "once for all when he offered up himself" (*Heb* 7: 27). This function as intermediary between God and man is called the "Priesthood of Christ". Because of this sacerdotal function, Christ is given the title of High Priest in the *Epistle to the Hebrews* and in all Christian tradition. *Psalm* 110: 4 cited in the *Epistle to the Hebrews* (7: 21) states: "Thou art a priest forever".

The Priesthood of the Church

Christ is thus our High Priest. As we know very well, He acts in the world through His Body, the Church; it is through her that His voice is heard. He makes her a partner in the sacrifice of His own Body, which He offers to the Father. Christ does nothing without His Body. The Church participates fully in Christ's priesthood. This means that our Lord Jesus asks for our collaboration in carrying out His work in the world and in addressing His Father. St Paul tells us: "we are God's fellow workers" (1 *Cor* 3: 9). When a

Christian leans lovingly over someone who is suffering, he acts as the hand of Christ; when he declares the truth of the Gospel, he acts as the mouth of Christ. For that he must first become a true member of Christ's Body through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit must make him a "priest", namely, a person who participates in Christ's work, in Christ's priesthood. This change is effected through what we call the Mysteries of Initiation.

The priesthood of the Church is recognised in two levels: in royal priesthood and in ministerial priesthood.

The Royal Priesthood in the Church

Acts 8: 18 states that "the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands". We have two instances in the Acts of the Apostles: 8: 4-25 and 19: 1-7, where laying on of the apostles' hands truly takes place.

Acts 8: 4-25 explains the situation of a great persecution that happened in about 36 A.D. after the stoning of Stephen. The Christians of Jerusalem were dispersed; deacon Philip went to Samaria, preaching Christ. The Samaritans accepted the Word of God, but "they had only been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus" and the Holy Spirit "had not yet fallen on any of them" (8: 16). "The apostles at Jerusalem ... sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. ... Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit" (8: 14, 15, 17).

The second instance is that of St Paul going to Ephesus in about 56 A.D.

> There he found some disciples. And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit". And he said, "Into what then were you baptised?" They said, "Into John's baptism". And Paul said, "John baptised with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus". On hearing this, they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied" (*Acts* 19: 1-6).

Thus the new faithful received the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands, just as the apostles had received Him on Pentecostal day at Jerusalem. The gift of Pentecost continues in the Church through the Mysteries or Sacraments. It is in fact the unction of the Holy Spirit through the Mysteries of Initiation that leads people to the royal priesthood in the Church. St Peter says to the faithful: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (1 *Pet* 2: 9).

We have seen that Christ is our High Priest, namely, the intermediary between God and us; that He is God's spokesman and our advocate before God, and that this wonderful role is called priesthood. We have also seen that He makes His whole Body, the entire Church, a part of this priesthood. But the members of the Church must first be clothed in his sanctity. His priestly function must be transferred to them; they must become priests, inheritors of His Kingdom and future kings. St John tells us that "[He] made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father" (*Rev* 1: 6;

5: 10). The Church is a nation of priests; the Mysteries of Initiation transform every Christian into a priest. This is what we now call "the royal priesthood in the Church".

The Ministerial Priesthood in the Church

The ministerial priesthood in the Church developed in three grades: the bishop, the priest and the deacon.

The Bishop

In his first letter to Timothy, St Paul says: "Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophetic utterance when the council of elders laid their hands upon you" (1 *Tim* 4: 14). In the second letter he says: "I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands" (2 *Tim* 1: 6). He also tells Timothy to ordain elders and entrust them with the apostolic teaching: "And what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 *Tim* 2:2). He asks Timothy to "remain at Ephesus" (1 *Tim* 1: 3) to carry out his mission.

Thus in the person of Timothy we have a living example of the one whom we call later a bishop.

St Justin (+ca.165) tells us that a bishop is the one who presides over the Eucharistic assembly. As a result he discharges three functions in the city where he lives:

a) He is charged with leading the people of God toward the Kingdom just as Moses led Israel into the Promised Land.

b) He must nurture them with the true Word. He must transmit to them the teaching, which the apostles received from Christ. This transmission of Christ's truth, of which the bishops are guardians, is what we call the "apostolic tradition". And the uninterrupted succession of bishops is called the "apostolic succession". It guarantees the unity of the Church through the ages, linking successive generations by proclaiming the same truth, the same Word of God.

c) The bishop is charged with feeding the people of God with the heavenly Bread, which the priests distribute at the Eucharistic assembly over which he presides. The presence of a successor to the apostles as the head of the eucharistic assembly was indeed founded by Christ and his apostles; that it is part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. The bishop who brings together the faithful of his own eparchy to partake of the Body and Blood of Christ must himself be in communion with the bishops of other eparchies. He is the link between his own Church and all others. He is a guarantee of the Church's unity in geographic space.

Thus the bishop plays an essential role in articulating the Body of Christ; he insures its unity through time and space. That is why St Ignatius of Antioch tells us: "Wherever

the bishop appears, let the people be there; just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the catholic Church"[1].

The college of bishops has the same function in the Church as the college of the twelve apostles had. It guarantees the "apostolicity" of the Church, namely, the continuity of its life and teaching from the time of the apostles themselves.

The Priest

The priests of the early Christian community were a continuation of the tradition of "elders" who presided over Jewish communities. The Christian priests participate in a particularly active way in the ministry and priesthood of Christ. If we compare the bishops' role to that of Moses, priests can be compared to the seventy-two elders of whom God said to Moses: "I will take some of the spirit which is upon you and put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone" (*Num* 11: 17).

Under the unifying supervision of the bishop, priests carry on functions, which are more or less similar to his, but on a level at which they can maintain a personal contact with each one of the faithful. They can bring the Word of God and the consoling, forgiving, and healing presence of God's Spirit to each of the sheep whom the Lord loves.

Chosen from among the people, priests are workers who remind all those who suffer that the Lord Jesus tells

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[1] W.A.Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers I*, Collegeville 1970, p. 25

them: "Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (*Mt* 11: 28-30).

The Deacon

The deacon is called upon to continue the service of the Servant Jesus, who washed the feet of his disciples, and of the "Suffering Servant" of whom Isaiah says: "The righteous one, my servant, [shall] make many to be accounted righteous" (*Is* 53: 11).

In the beginning the deacons were given the task of serving tables at common meals (*Acts* 6: 2-3), because certain "widows were neglected in the daily distribution" (*Acts* 6: 1). The apostles were then free to devote themselves to "prayer and to the ministry of the Word" (*Acts* 6: 4).

The deacons are in the rank of St Stephen and his friends and their wonderful mission is to serve the poor and also to serve at the Eucharistic table: to distribute both earthly nourishment and heavenly bread to the faithful.

> The diaconate was instituted not for priesthood but for the service of the bishops and presbyters. Deacons were, in fact, once considered as their hands and eyes; or, as expressed by Ignatius of Antioch, the deacons manifest in harmony with them to the faithful people "the commandment of the Lord". A similar perspective, preserved in the Orthodox churches and in the process of being recuperated in the Latin

> community, is also to be placed in full light in the Eastern Catholic Churches. The re-establishment of its liturgical and extra-liturgical mission appears, in fact, to be very beneficial[2].

Ordo, Ordinatio, Ordinare

Ordo was a pure secular term in the vocabulary of Roman antiquity. "The term there signified a well-defined social body that was distinct from the people: the senatorial order (*Ordo clarissimus*), then the order of knights. In the life of the city an *ordo* was a body of those who governed. This explains the recurring phrase *ordo populusque*, "the 'order' and the people"[3]. The Church assumed this term for its clergy. In the course of time it developed into three groups of clergy, namely, the episcopal order (*ordo episcoporum*), the order of the presbytery (*ordo presbiterii*) and the order of deacons (*ordo diaconorum*).

> The Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches explains that the clergy, joined among themselves by hierarchical communion and constituted in various degrees of the Order of their sacred ordination, participate in diverse ways in the one divinely instituted ecclesiastical ministry. However, it also foresees the possibility, in addition to these, of other ministers called minor Orders.
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> Can. 325 specifies that "in virtue of sacred ordination clerics are distinguished as bishops, presbyters and

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[2] *Instruction*, n. 76

[3] P. Jounel, "Ordinations", in A.G.Martimort(ed.), *The Church at Prayer III – The Sacraments*, London 1988, pp. 139-140

> deacons". Can. 327 adds that if, in addition to these, other ministers are also admitted or instituted for the service of the people of God or to exercise functions of the sacred liturgy, they are to be constituted in minor Orders and are generally called minor clerics. The canon establishes that their constitution is governed "only by the particular law of their own Church *sui juris*". The intent of the Code is for the tradition of each individual Eastern Church *sui juris* to be respected[4].

Ordinatio and *ordinare* were terms used for the appointment of officials. The highest ecclesiastical offices were naturally liturgical. They require necessarily a consecration or blessing. Thus the terms *ordinatio* and *ordinare* began to signify also the rite of consecration or blessing pertaining to each order.

> Can. 323 # 1 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches affirms that "clerics, who are also called sacred ministers, are Christian faithful who, chosen by the competent ecclesiastical authority, are deputed through a gift of the Holy Spirit received in sacred ordination to be ministers of the Church participating in the mission and power of Christ, the Pastor". Sacred ministers have a special link with the liturgy, because they perform a function in it that is distinguished from the other faithful, and because of their frequent contact with it[5].

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[4] *Instruction*, n. 72
[5] *Instruction*, n. 70

"The *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus is witness to an effort at establishing a technical terminology in Greek. In secular Greek an official was said to be "instituted" or "established" in his office (*kathistatai*); he could also be said to be "designated" (*cheirotoneitai*). Hippolytus applies both terms to ecclesiastical offices, but limits the use of the second to ordinations in the strict sense, that is, to offices that make the chosen person a member of one of the three levels in the hierarchic structure and for which a consecration is required. The ritual gesture used in this consecration was the imposition of hands (*cheirothetein*); it was of Jewish origin and is attested in the *Acts of the Apostles*. Hippolytus' intention in his choice of words is to bring out the fact that an ordination (*cheirotonia, cheirotonein*) necessarily implies an imposition of hands"[6].

Apostolic Tradition and Ordinations

The ordination rituals presented in the *Apostolic Tradition* by Hippolytus appear to be the most ancient document on ordinations. According to scholars this is at the root of all ordination rites developed both in the West and the East. It presents the rituals as well as the prayers to be said during the ordinations of bishops, priests and deacons. It also speaks about ministers of lesser orders.

The bishop is to be elected by the entire people. The ordination is to be conducted on a Sunday in the presence of the people, the college of priests and the neighbouring bishops. The bishops impose their hands on the candidate while the others pray in their heart for the descent of the Holy Spirit. At the request of all the bishops, one of them says the

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[6] P. Jounel, "Ordinations", p. 141

prayer of blessing. In this prayer he asks God to pour out on the candidate the sovereign Spirit whom he gave through Jesus Christ to his apostles. He then lists the functions of a bishop: to feed the holy flock, to exercise the high priesthood by serving God night and day, to propitiate him and offer the gifts of the holy Church, to forgive sins, distribute offices, and exercise the power of loosing that was given to the apostles[7]. After the ordination prayer the entire congregation greet and give kiss of peace to the new bishop. Then the deacons bring offerings to him and he says the Eucharistic prayer together with the entire *presbyterium.*

In the case of priestly ordination, the *Apostolic Tradition* does not speak of an election and ratification of the candidate by the people. But other contemporary documents do attest to this approval. Ordination consists in an imposition of the bishop's hands on the head of the candidate, "while the presbyters touch the one to be ordained", and in a prayer of the bishop. The latter asks that the ordained be given the Spirit of grace and counsel proper to the presbyterate "so that he may support and govern your people", as the elders once helped Moses. The *Apostolic Tradition* says that the priests present also are imposing their hands during the ordination of a priest "because of the common and like Spirit of the clergy". The priests only make the gesture, it is the bishop who ordains[8].

A deacon is normally chosen by the people. The bishop alone imposes hands on him because a deacon "is not ordained to the priesthood, but to serve the bishop and to fulfil the bishop's command. He has no part in the council of

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[7] Cf. W.A.Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers I*, pp. 166-167
[8] Cf. W.A.Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers I*, pp. 167-168

the clergy but is to attend to his own duties and is to acquaint the bishop with such matters as are needful". This is why the bishop alone ordains a deacon. In the ordination prayer the bishop invokes the Spirit of grace and zeal on this servant whom God has chosen to serve the Church and bring the gifts to the altar "so that he may serve with a pure heart and without blame and that, ever giving praise to you, he may be accounted by your good will as worthy of this high office"[9].

The *Apostolic Tradition* also mentions about other ministers of lesser orders, who are appointed but without an imposition of hands. "When a widow is to be appointed, she is not to be ordained, but is designated by being named such. ... A widow is appointed by words alone, and is then associated with the other widows. Hands are not imposed upon her, because she does not offer the oblation and she does not conduct the Liturgy. Ordination is for the clergy because of the Liturgy; but a widow is appointed for prayer, and prayer is the duty of all. A lector is appointed by the bishop's giving him the book; for he is not ordained. ... Hands are not imposed upon a subdeacon; but he shall be designated by name as one who may serve the deacon"[10].

> It does not seem appropriate that the different Churches *sui juris* change their customs regarding minor Orders, once shared by all the Churches: this has, in fact, its own special meaning. Far from abandoning them, the reforms of the particular laws of the different Churches should rather restore them to greater significance and vitality. This is also recommended for reasons of ecumenical nature: if the

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[9] Cf. W.A.Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers I*, p. 168
[10] Cf. W.A.Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers I*, p. 169

Eastern Catholic Churches have a special duty of fostering unity among all Eastern Churches, among other ways, through religious fidelity to the ancient traditions, it would not seem helpful to introduce a differentiation of usage with respect to the Orthodox Churches, all participating in the same common origin. Every change that has been improperly introduced in more or less recent times should be re-examined based on these principles[11].

The minor Orders and the diaconate are not mere formalities in preparation for presbyterial ordination. They provide a specific service in the Church, and as such are to be effectively exercised in a definitive way by those who do not intend to enter the presbyterate and in a sufficiently ample way by those who are to be ordained presbyters. This is especially valid for the diaconate. In this sense, misgivings should not be had toward conferring minor Orders and even the diaconate on those who comport themselves well, are suitable and appropriately prepared for the responsibility they assume, and declare themselves available for the service of the Church, even if they must continue to live with their families and practise their own trades. Thus, the ministers necessary for a dignified and fitting celebration of the liturgy are obtained, avoiding the practice, different also in this case from the Latin Church in which it is no longer in use, of having ministers of a higher range perform the liturgical functions that should be reserved to those of lower range (the most frequent case is that of presbyters

[11] *Instruction*, n. 74

functioning as deacons), or of permanently appointing to the laity liturgical tasks expected of a minister: practices to be eliminated[12].

Ordinations according to the *Apostolic Constitutions*

A triple ratification of the choice is required before the ordination of a bishop. A group of three bishops has to perform the ordination rite. The imposition of the Book of the Gospels on the head of the candidate is specially introduced. The prayer of consecration is an elaboration of the one in the *Apostolic Tradition*.

The ordination of priests and deacons keeps up the simplicity of the *Apostolic Tradition*. The imposition of hands by the priests present during the ordination of priests is dropped. In the prayer, they are said to be chosen by the other priests. In the ordination prayer of the deacons, they are said to be elected in the place of St Stephen.

According to the *Apostolic Constitutions*, the subdeacons and Lectors are also instituted by an imposition of hands[13].

Euchologion of Serapion on Ordinations

The prayer of Episcopal ordination considers the bishops as the successors of the apostles, prophets and patriarchs: "Lord, make this man a living (=zealous) bishop, a holy bishop in succession to your holy apostles, and give

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[12] *Instruction*, n. 75

[13] Cf. P. Jounel, "Ordinations", p. 145

him the grace you gave to all your true servants, the prophets and patriarchs".

The prayer formula over a priest is seen in the plural: "We stretch out our hand, O Lord ... upon this man, and we ask that the Spirit of truth descend upon him". This shows that the *presbyterium* was also laying their hands together with the bishop. The prayer continues thus: "May he have the divine Spirit within him and so be able to govern your people, dispense your divine oracles, and reconcile your people with you, the uncreated God".

During the imposition of hands on a deacon the bishop prays the Lord, who has "chosen bishops, priests, and deacons for the worship of the catholic Church", to establish (or institute: *katasteson*) his servant "as a deacon of his catholic Church and to give him the spirit of knowledge and discernment so that in the midst of the holy people he may be able to minister in worship with purity and without reproach"[14].

The Thomas Christians of India

As the Thomas Christians were having the East Syriac liturgical tradition, all the ordination rituals were of that tradition. Moreover, up to the 16th century, the Chaldean bishops who were among them were naturally ordaining the candidates according to the East Syriac liturgical books. There is no document concerning an Episcopal ordination in India. As history shows the already ordained bishops were coming to India from time to time. Ordinations usually

[14] Cf. P. Jounel, "Ordinations", pp. 145-146

conducted in India were that of the *Qaroya* (the Lector), *Heupadiakona* (the Subdeacon), *Msamsana* (the Deacon) and *Qasisa* (the Priest).

According to most of the documents available, the ordinations were given in two stages: *Semmasa*, namely, the ordinations up to Diaconate and that of *Cathenar*, that is, ordination to priesthood. It appears that there was no age bar for ordaining to any grade.

> In selecting candidates no consideration seems to have been given to age restrictions. According to Dionysio, at one time little children were ordained, and afterwards boys of sixteen and seventeen years; even at the time of his writing (A.D. 1578) such anomalous practices persisted, although the custom was being corrected, and the archbishop maintained the Tridentine form. Monserrate gives us the reason why no age restriction was countenanced in this matter: It was not always easy for the bishops to come from Babylon and hence children of all ages used to be ordained[15].

The candidates were trained by elderly priests in the same parish or by famous *Malpans* (learned doctors) at well-known centres of learning. It was also the ancient Indian system of training, called *Gurukula Vasam*, that is, to live with the teacher and learn. Ordinary priests learned only what was necessary for exercising their priestly ministry. But selected ones were given special training in the Sacred

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[15] A.M.Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India I*, Bangalore 1989, p. 188; Cf. Also, T. Puthiakunnel, *Syro-Malabar Clergy and Their General Obligations*, Ernakulam 1964, pp. 61f.

Scriptures (Old and New), the Law and the Fathers of the Church. Angamali was considered such a centre and some Portuguese documents call it a university.

> Ordinary priests learned only to read (and perhaps understood) Syriac, the liturgical language, just enough to perform the various functions attached to their office... If such was the general situation, there is evidence that there were specialised persons and educational centres for the training of the clergy, perhaps for only a selected few. Thus the Venetians heard from Joseph the Indian: "They (the Christians of St Thomas) have excellent doctors; study of letters; they have the books of the prophets just as we..." Goes says the same thing: "Their doctors teach the Old and New Law, especially the prophets in public schools. Some of them are well-versed in the Law". Dionysio from his own personal knowledge wrote that the St Thomas Christians had many doctors who interpreted the Sacred Scriptures; that they esteemed St John Chrysostom much; that they had many apocryphal histories.
>
> Angamali was a training centre for priests who came from all parts of Malabar. The person who recorded the visit in 1557 of Fr Melchior Carneiro to the Christians in the interior, says that Angamali was a "university":
>
> ...for there is a *casanar* who is like a father among them and in him they had great confidence on account of his old age and learning. For fifty years he has

> been teaching the Sacred Scriptures, and he has many disciples from all parts of Malabar[16].

Some of such better-educated priests were specially trained for preaching and they were heard even for hours by the faithful.

> Some of the better educated among the priests were especially trained to preach. Goes says that there were preachers among them who ordinarily preached to them during the whole year. Dionysio tells us how the preaching was performed;
>
> These Christians love sermons, and sermons are delivered to them by those *cathenars* who know something. Their method of preaching is to narrate stories one after another without any regard for sequence or relevance to the occasion. They enjoy preaching for two three hours at a stretch[17].

The priests were generally married. According to Joseph the Indian and the Portuguese writer De Goes: "The priests keep conjugal chastity, that is, after the death of the first wife they do not marry another". From the second half of the 16th century onwards they began to keep celibacy due to the Portuguese influence. Dionysio writes in 1579: "A few years ago the priests were married. Now all keep celibacy and if someone gets married, he remains suspended".

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[16] A.M.Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India I*, pp. 188-189; Cf. Also, T. Puthiakunnel, *Syro-Malabar Clergy...*, pp. 65-66

[17] A.M.Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India I*, p. 190

The wives of the priests (*Bath Qyama* = Daughter of the covenant) had precedence in the church and had the title, *Cathediar*. They also used to wear a pectoral cross of gold or silver just as the *cathenars*, the priests. They usually led the women folk during the liturgical celebrations.

The priests did not wear tonsure and were dressed in white. According to Barbosa, a Portuguese writer, "They wear their tonsures reversed, hair in the place of the tonsure and the head around it shaven. They wear shirts, and turbans on their heads, they go barefoot, and wear long beards". The ordinary dress of the priests at home was not at all distinct from other laymen. Thus the Portuguese could not distinguish them during their early contacts[18].

There was a choir with sufficient priests and *sammasas* (deacons, subdeacons and lectors) attached to each parish church. The various grades of priesthood were considered as permanent. Their principal duty was to see to the proper celebration of the liturgical functions in the church, especially the *Qurbana* and the Divine Praises. The clerics and their family were always maintained from the property of the church and the offerings of the faithful. The *palliyogam*, namely, the parish council, consisting of the priests and the elders of all families in the parish, looked after the temporalities of the church. This was, in fact, a replica of the temple administration system with the Hindus, their neighbours.

According to the *Mar Thoma Margam*, the Christian life-style of the St Thomas Christians of India, the bishops, priests and other clerics were more spiritual leaders and

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[18] A.M.Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India I*, p. 186

animators than material administrators or social workers. They involved in material or social affairs only when it was unavoidable. Even then they had always the greatest respect in the community.

Besides the eparchial clergy, there were also monks and nuns among the St Thomas Christians. Joseph the Indian says that there were monks in black habit who lived in great poverty and chastity. There were also nuns of the same category. De Goes writes that there were monasteries of monks who wear black dress. There were nuns too of the same Order. Both monks and nuns lived in great obedience, honesty, chastity and poverty. Ros, the first Latin bishop of the Thomas Christians, speaking about Angamali, calls the church there, the hermitage of SS. Gervasis and Prothasis[19]. Mylakombu and Edappilly were other centres of monks and nuns. Monastic life is intimately linked with ecclesial life in East Syriac tradition. Monastic life is the supreme expression of ecclesial life.

Ordination Rituals

Till the 16th century, as mentioned above, bishops from Persia were there among the Thomas Christians of India. They used the East Syriac liturgical books for ordaining the clerical candidates. After the so-called Synod of Diamper in 1599 the Latin Prelates began to rule over them. They used naturally the Latin Pontifical and liturgical books for ordaining the Thomas Christian candidates to various grades of priesthood. In 1896 the Thomas Christians got their own men as bishops and rulers. They were

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[19] Cf. A.M.Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India I*, pp. 187-188

ordaining clerics for several years using the Latin Pontifical within the *Qurbana* in Syriac language. In order to solve this anomaly the bishops thought of preparing a Syriac translation of the Latin Pontifical and get it approved from Rome. Thus the Syro-Malabar hierarchy prepared a Syriac translation of the Latin (Roman) Pontifical and sent it to Rome for approbation in 1929. But on December 1, 1934, the Pope Pius XI of happy memory denied the approbation in the following words:

> Latinism ought not to be encouraged among the Orientals; the Holy See intends not to latinise, but to catholicise. Half measures are neither generous nor fruitful. Let them, therefore, continue in *statu quo*; but let a commission be nominated entrusted with the task of revising the most ancient Pontifical (of the Church), which could be printed part by part[20].

The commission thus nominated finished its work as directed by the Pope. But due to the Second World War, they could not print the text immediately. It was printed only in 1957. It was, in fact, the authentic East Syriac Pontifical in Syriac language[21]. It contains the prayers and rituals for the imposition of hands on the *Qaroya* (Lector), *Heupadiakona* (Subdeacon), *Msamsana* (Deacon), *Qasisa* (Priest), *Corapescopa* (Choir Bishop), *Archediakon* (Archdeacon), *Archediakon d'Qellaita Patriarkaita* (Archdeacon of the Patriarchal Council), *Apescopa* (Bishop), *Mithrapolitta* (Archbishop) and *Patriarka* (Patriarch).

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[20] Cf. Report of the Plenary of Congregation for the Oriental Churches, Rome 1 December 1934

[21] *Ktaba d-Takse Kumraye...*, Rome 1957

No official English or Malayalam translation of this text is yet published. For the ordination of bishops, each time they prepare a translation basing on this source. For the ordination of *Qaroya* (Lector), *Heupadiakona* (Subdeacon), *Msamsana* (Deacon) and *Qasisa* (Priest) a Malayalam translation of this text is officially published in 1960[22]. Then after all the bishops were using this liturgical book for giving ordinations. We give here below a short description and sketch of the ordination rituals as given in this liturgical book.

Ordination to *Qaroya*, the Lector

All come in procession to the *qestroma*, the chancel. The bishop first cuts off a little hair of the candidate saying, "Let Christ remove all the weight of sin in you forever". Then he puts on the candidate the *kottina*, the long tunic, praying, "May Lord our God put on you the new man who is renewed through the knowledge of the truth by the grace of Jesus Christ". The *zunara*, the sash, is also given by praying, "Gird your servant, my Lord, with the thread of chastity that he persist in your ministry with wholeness and sanctity forever".

Then the bishop enters the sanctuary and begins the service with the Lord's prayer. At its end come an oration and *Psalm* 105. During the psalm the bishop kneels down. At the end of the psalm he stands up and recites the oration in preparation to the imposition of hands. Now the Archdeacon announces the name of the candidate and then follows the laying of hands. The prayer of imposition clearly mentions

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[22] *The Rituals and Rules for the Ordination of Qaroya, Heupadiakona, Msamsana and Qasisa*, (in Malayalam), Alwaye 1960

the task of the candidate as reading God's word in the assembly of the people.

After the imposition of hands the bishop gives him a folded stole and the book of *Qeryane*, that is, the Lectionary containing the Old Testament readings[23].

Ordination to *Heupadiakona*, the Subdeacon

The candidate vests in *kottina* and *zunara* and comes in procession to the *qestroma*, the chancel, with the book of *Qeryane* and *urara*, the stole, in his hands. The bishop together with other ministers comes to the *qestroma*, cuts off a little hair of the candidate, enters the sanctuary and absolves the Lord's prayer, oration, *psalm* 105 and oration for himself to accomplish the ministry worthily, as in the case of ordination to *Qaroya*. Then the archdeacon announces the name of the candidate to be raised as subdeacon. The imposition of hands and prayer follow. Subdeacon is specially set apart for the ministry in the church. After the imposition of hands, the bishop takes back the book of *Qeryane* from the hands of the candidate and puts on him the stole around his neck in such a way that its ends fall to the front and back on the left shoulder[24].

It is clearly said in the Rituals that the *Qaroya* and *Heupadiakona* are not signed on their forehead. The Holy Spirit does not descend upon them. The bishop says only the prayers that separate them from ordinary faithful, in order to

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[23] Cf. *The Rituals and Rules...*, pp. 1-7
[24] Cf. *The Rituals and Rules...*, pp. 8-11

close doors, minister before the Levites and read the prophecies[25].

Ordination to *Msamsana*, the Deacon

Candidate wears the vestments of *Heupadiakona* and comes in procession to the *qestroma*.

- Cutting off the hair
- The Lord's prayer
- Oration of the bishop
- *Psalm* 105 with its special *qanona*
- Oration of the bishop for himself
- Bishop's oration for the blessings on the candidate
- Candidate is led to the middle of the sanctuary
- *Qanona*: *Ps* 15 with its special *qanona*
- Oration of the bishop
- Incensing the sanctuary
- *Onitha*, the Anthem
- Oration of the bishop
- *Qanona*: *Ps* 118: 33-40 with special *qanona*, where the example of the first deacons are mentioned.
- Oration of the bishop
- *Qanona*: *Ps* 103: 17f. with special *qanona*
- Oration of the bishop
- *Qanona*: *Ps* 89: 15f. with special *qanona* or *Ps* 21: 2f. with special *qanona*
- Oration of the bishop
- *Qanona*: *Ps* 122 with special *qanona*
- The candidate stands on his right knee and hands on his ears to show that he is receiving one coin and is obedient to the bishop and priests.

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[25] *The Rituals and Rules*..., p. 11

- *Gehanta* prayer of the bishop, where he offers the candidate to the rank of deacon and prays for the descent of the Holy Spirit.
- Archdeacon's announcement of the candidate's name and request for the prayer of the community.
- Prayer of imposition of hands, where the bishop invokes the grace of the Holy Spirit to descend upon the candidate and form him as a worthy minister at the sanctuary according to the example of St Stephen and his friends.

The bishop then takes the stole of the candidate and puts it on the left shoulder in such a way that its ends fall to the front and back reciting the prayer, "Our Lord and our God, illumine this your servant with the light of holiness and enlighten his soul with the glittering works of sanctity".

The bishop gives him also the *Engartha*, the book of the Epistles, and signs him on the forehead saying, "(N) is selected, sanctified, perfected and completed for the ministry in the Church and to do the works of St Stephen".

Then the bishop prostrates in the sanctuary and standing up begins the *Qanona*: *Ps* 144: 18f. with a special *qanona*. During the *Qanona*, the new deacon, led by the archdeacon, goes around the altar, kisses at both its ends, comes to the bishop and kneels before him. The bishop blesses him saying, "Let Christ who has received you for his ministry, perfect you for the service of justice, forever". Those who are in the sanctuary show their respect to the new deacon by kissing on his head.

The celebration concludes with the Lord's prayer, two orations of the bishop, orations for help by assisting priests and the *Huttamma*, the sealing prayer[26].

Ordination to Priesthood

The candidate puts on the vestments of a deacon and carrying the *paina* on his left shoulder comes in procession to the *qestroma*, the chancel.

- Profession of faith if not done earlier according to prescriptions
- Cutting off the hair
- Entrance to the sanctuary
- The Lord's prayer
- Oration of the bishop
- *Qanona*: *Ps* 84 with a special *qanona*
- Oration of the bishop
- Incensing of the sanctuary
- *Onitha*, the Anthem
- Oration of the bishop
- Candidate, led by the archdeacon, kisses the altar and the baptismal font.
- *Qanona*: *Ps* 89: 15f. or 21: 2f. or 84: 7f. with special *qanona*
- Oration of the bishop
- *Qanona*: *Ps* 118:65f. or 131: 19f. or 36: 7f. with special *qanona*
- Oration of the bishop
- *Qanona*: *Ps* 122: 1f. with special *qanona*
- At the end of the *Qanona*, the bishop kneels down, bows the head and stands up.

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[26] Cf, *The Rituals and Rules...*, pp. 12-45

- The archdeacon asks the candidate to kneel down on both the knees and hold the hands in supplication position above the eyes. This signifies that he is receiving two coins and is empowered to invoke the Holy Spirit, give blessings, to beget spiritual children and nourish them.
- Oration of the bishop for himself
- First prayer of imposition of hands, where the bishop offers the candidate before the Lord and requests the Holy Spirit to descend upon him to give him the grace of priesthood.
- Archdeacon announces the name of the candidate and requests the prayer of the community for him.
- Second prayer of imposition of hands, where special mention is made about the power of priesthood as to preach the Word of God, impose hands on the sick and heal them, offer sacrifices in the Church, bless the baptismal Pont and give baptism, forgive the sins of the people of God, and lead them to sanctity in the Church.

After the prayer of imposition of hands, the candidate is asked to stand up and the bishop puts on him the priestly garments. When he puts on him the *paina*, the bishop says, "Let our Lord and our God put on you the garment of justice that you may please Him all through your life on earth by serving Him sincerely, nobly and holily. Amen".

Then the bishop gives the candidate the *Evangalion*, the Gospel Lectionary, and signs him on the forehead saying, "(N) is separated, sanctified and perfected for the priesthood in the Church and for the ministry of Aaron in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, forever".

The bishop kisses on the head of the newly ordained; the newly ordained kneels down, bows his head and stands up.

The bishop then begins the *Qanona*: *Ps* 144: 18f. with a special *qanona*. During this *Qanona* the newly ordained, led by the archdeacon, kisses the right and left sides of the altar and comes to the bishop to kiss his hand. The bishop blesses him saying, "Let Christ who has received you for His ministry, perfect you for the service of justice, forever".

Now the priests in the sanctuary kiss on the head of the newly ordained and welcome him to their fold.

- The Lord's prayer
- Two orations of the bishop
- Orations for help from Our Lady, the Apostles, St Thomas, and Saints, especially the Eastern Saints, said by the priests.
- *Huttamma*, the sealing prayer[27].

Pro Manuscripto Text

After the second Vatican Council the Syro-Malabar Liturgical Committee published *pro manuscripto* texts for the ordination of *Qaroya* (Lector), *Heupadiakona* (Subdeacon), *Msamsana* (Deacon) and *Qasisa* (Priest). They are highly latinised, modernised and having some inculturation elements, with an added emphasis on the Liturgy of the Word.

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[27] Cf. *The Rituals and Rules...*, pp. 46-83

Some of the bishops began to use this text for giving ordinations. Some are still using it while the others are using the official translation from the Syriac sources. Thus there is also a division among the bishops in using the ordination rituals.

In this precarious situation, the Commission for Liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Bishops' Synod has recently (20 June 2003) published a draft text for the ordination of priests. It is, in fact, a compromised text, which is more faithful to the Syriac sources than the *pro manuscripto* text. It is published for getting the opinions. The sketch of this draft text is given below.

The candidate, vested in deacon's garments and holding the *paina* in his hands, enters the church in procession, led by the archdeacon, together with the parents and other priests. When the procession reaches at the sanctuary rails, the parents impose their hands on the head of the candidate and bless him. The bishop together with other ministers comes directly to the sanctuary. During the procession an entrance hymn is sung.

- Archdeacon's request to accept the candidate for ordination
- Bishop's reception of the request
- Profession of faith
- Cutting off the hair
- Angels' hymn
- The Lord's prayer
- Oration of the bishop
- *Qanona*: *Ps* 84 with a special *qanona*. During this *Qanona*, the candidate, led by the archdeacon, kisses at the right side of the altar and the baptismal font.

- Oration of the bishop
- Incensing the sanctuary, the candidate and the community
- *Onitha*, the Anthem
- Oration of the bishop
- *Qanona*: *Ps* 89: 15-22 or 84: 8-13 with a special *qanona*
- Oration of the bishop
- *Qanona*: *Ps* 118: 65-72 or 131: 9-18 or 36: 8-11 with a special *qanona*.
- Oration of the bishop
- Resurrection hymn
- Oration of the bishop
- *Trisagion*
- Oration of the bishop
- *Qeryane*, the OT Readings: *Ex* 3: 1-10 or 40: 1-15
  Jer 1: 1-10 or *Is* 61: 1-10
- *Surraya*, the Responsorial hymn
- Oration of the bishop
- *Engartha*, the Epistle: 1 *Pet* 5: 1-4 or *Heb* 5: 1-10 or *Eph* 4: 1-7, 14-16
- *Zummara*, the *Halleluiah* hymn
- *Evangalion*, the Gospel: *Jn* 15: 5, 7-10, 13-17 or
  Mt 10: 1-9, 16 or
  Jn 17: 6-19 or
  Jn 10: 1-5, 11-18
- Homily
- *Karozutha*, the Proclamation prayer
- Oration of the bishop
- *Qanona*: *Ps* 122: 1-5 with a special *qanona*
- Oration of the bishop
- Hymn to the Holy Spirit
- At the end of the hymn, the bishop kneels down before the altar, bows the head and stands up. The

candidate stands kneeling, bowing the head and holding the hands in supplication mode above the eyes.

- Oration of the bishop for himself
- First prayer of imposition of hands, where the bishop offers the candidate before the Lord and requests the Holy Spirit to descend upon him to give him the grace of priesthood.
- Archdeacon announces the name of the candidate and requests the prayer of the community for him.
- Second prayer of imposition of hands, where special mention is made about the power of priesthood as to preach the Word of God, impose hands on the sick and heal them, offer sacrifices in the Church, bless baptismal Pont and give baptism, bless marriages, forgive sins of the people of God and lead them to sanctity in the Church.

After the prayer of imposition of hands, the candidate is asked to prostrate and stand up. The bishop put on him the priestly garments. When he puts on him the *paina* the bishop prays, "Let our Lord and our God put on you the garment of justice that you may please Him all through your life on earth by serving Him sincerely, nobly and holily. Amen".

Then the bishop gives him the book of the Gospels saying, "Preach the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the way, the truth and the life. Let Jesus of the Gospels be your strength and the Gospel of Jesus be your life rule".

The bishop then signs the newly ordained on the forehead saying, "(N) is separated, sanctified and perfected for the priesthood in the Church, in the name of the Father, of

the Son and of the Holy Spirit, forever". An option is given here to use also the *Myron* for this signing.

The bishop kisses on the head of the newly ordained; the newly ordained kneels down, bows his head and stands up.

The bishop then begins the *Qanona*: *Ps* 144: 18f. with a special *qanona*. During this *Qanona* the newly ordained, led by the archdeacon, kisses on the right and left sides of the altar and comes to the bishop to kiss his hand. The bishop blesses the newly ordained saying, "Let Christ who has received you for his ministry, perfect you for the service of justice, forever".

Now the priests present approach the newly ordained and give him the kiss of congratulation.

- Two orations of the bishop
- Orations for help from Our Lady, the Apostles, St Thomas and the Saints by assisting priests.
- *Huttamma*, the sealing prayer.

Ordination to Episcopate

It is already mentioned that the rituals for Episcopal Ordination are compiled for each case as it comes. We give here the sketch of one of such Episcopal Ordination. It is of Mar Joseph Perumthottam, conducted at Changanassery on May 20, 2002.

All enter the church in procession in the following order: the Cross, the Gospel Lectionary, candles, incense, priests, bishops, candidate, archdeacon and the celebrants.

During the procession they sing a hymn, where the intercession of Our Lady, Apostle St Thomas and other Apostles is sought.

- Reading of the appointment bull
- Paying respect to the relics of the Martyrs during a special hymn
- Profession of faith
- The Lord`s prayer
- Oration of the bishop
- *Psalm* 131: 1-18
- Oration of the bishop
- Incensing the sanctuary
- *Onitha*, the Anthem during incensing
- Oration of the bishop
- First *Qanona*
- Oration of the bishop
- Second *Qanona*
- Oration of the bishop
- Third *Qanona*
- Oration of the bishop
- Fourth *Qanona*
- Gospel proclamation: *Mt* 16: 13-18 + *Jn* 21: 15-17 + *Mt* 6: 19. The archdeacon spreads the *Sosappa* that covers the Gospel Lectionary on the back of the candidate and the main celebrant, placing the Gospel Lectionary on the *Sosappa*, proclaims the Gospel.
- Homily
- The concelebrants place the Gospel Lectionary on the shoulder of the candidate; they also place their right hands on his sides all through the rite of imposition of hands.
- Hymn to the Holy Spirit

- Oration of the bishop for himself
- First prayer of imposition of hands, where the bishop offers the candidate before God and requests the Holy Spirit to come upon him and perfect him through Episcopal power.
- Archdeacon announces the name of the candidate and requests the prayer of the community.
- Second prayer of imposition of hands, where special mention is made of the power of Episcopate as to shepherd the sheep by proclaiming the true faith, to be light to those in darkness, a teacher to the ignorant, children and youth, exercise the power to bind and lose, impose hands on the sick and heal them, work miracles for God's glory, appoint priests, deacons, subdeacons, lectors and women ministers in the Church, and unite the faithful and lead them to sanctity. All the bishops present impose their hands on the candidate during this prayer. At the end of this prayer, the Gospel Lectionary is taken away from the shoulder of the candidate.
- The celebrant puts on the candidate the mitre and gives him the crosier, reciting appropriate prayers.
- The celebrant signs on the forehead of the candidate proclaiming, "(N) is separated, sanctified and perfected for the Episcopal ministry in (N) eparchy in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen". Then he kisses on the head of the newly ordained praying, "Let Christ who has selected you to shepherd his flock, strengthen you to fulfil his will to the end. Amen".
- All the bishops present show their respect to the new bishop. A special hymn is sung at that time.

- They continue the *Qurbana* with *Onitha d-Qanke*, the Anthem of the Rails, and conclude it as usual.

This Malayalam version of Episcopal Ordination is almost a faithful translation of the Syriac sources[28].

[28] Cf. *Ktaba d-Taksa Qumraye*, pp. 201-219

Chapter 6

THE MYSTERY OF MATRIMONY

The order of matrimony as it is given by G. P. Badger in his book, *Nestorians and their Rituals* may be considered as the basic structure of this sacrament in the East Syriac tradition[1]. The Thomas Christians of India made their own indigenous adaptation to this order by substituting *thali* and *mandrakodi* for the ring[2]. Studies on the East Syriac Marriage Rites are rather few[3].

The order described by G. P. Badger includes three parts: the Espousals, the Marriage and the setting up of the Bridal Chamber.

For the Espousals, the priest first asks separately to the custodians of both the parties their consent and the decision about the dowry. The priest then joins the right

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[1] G. P. Badger, *Nestorians and their Rituals* II, London 1852, pp. 244-281

[2] Dharmo, *The Rite of Marriage*, Thrichur 1960; Dharmo, *Marriage Rites of the East Syrian Church* (Syriac and Malayalam), Trichur 1968; The Draft text of the Syro-Malabar Marriage Rites of 1968 in J. Vellian (ed.), *Crown, Veil, Cross, Marriage Rites*, Poona 1990, pp. 22-24.

[3] P. Podipara, "The Social and Socio-ecclesiastical Customs of the Syrian Christians of India", in *Eastern Churches Quarterly* 7(1947)222-236; C. Payngot, "The Syro-Malabar Marriage", in G. Farnedi (ed.), *La Celebrazione Cristiana del Matrimonio: Symboli e Testi*, Roma 1986, pp. 261-282; M. Koikara, *The Sacredness of Marriage and Family in the Cultural Milieu of St. Thomas Christians*, Rome 1988; J. Vellian (ed.), *Crown, Veil, Cross...*; L. Edakalathur, *The Theology of Marriage in the East Syrian Tradition*, Roma 1994; S. M. Hanna, "Marriage", in A. G. Kollamparampil-J. Perumthottam (eds), *Bride at the Feet of the Bridegroom*, Studies in East Syrian Liturgical Law, A Tribute to Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil, Changanassery 1997, pp. 331-347.

hands of both the custodians in cross form, declares their consent before all assembled and gives them a blessing with the prayer: "The Lord Jesus Christ perfect your deed and bring it to pass, and make you rejoice in pure and undivided love, that you may be fruitful in the procreation of sons and daughters, and that He may save you from the malice of wicked men, and from the rebellious devils. Amen"[4].

For the Marriage, they prepare the cup, ring, cross and *hanana*[5] and the priest begins with "Glory to God in the highest..." and the Lord's Prayer. After the oration, they sing the psalm 45 with its special *qanona*. Then there follows an oration and an anthem. During the first stanza of the anthem, the priest mingles wine and water in the cup. After the anthem there follows an oration with psalm 37, 23-29 with its proper *qanona* and doxology. With an oration the priest takes the cup in his hands and says the prayer on the cup. Then he takes the ring in his hands and says the prayer on the ring. At its end he signs the cup with the ring and drops it into the cup. Then he takes the cross and says the prayer on the cross. At the conclusion of the prayer he signs the cup with the cross and drops it into the cup. Then he mixes the cup with *hanana* and shall say: "This cup of the espousals of our brother has been set apart, consecrated, and perfected, through the glorious priesthood, the Lord's Cross, and the *hanana* of the relics of the saints, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen"[6].

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[4] G.P.Badger, *Nestorians and their Rituals* II, p. 245.

[5] *Hanana* is the clay or dust taken from the tombs of saints, to be given as medicine to the sick. It is also mixed with the wine which is given to bridegrooms and brides when married.

[6] G.P.Badger, *Nestorians and their Rituals II*, p. 253.

Then the priest shall sign the cup thrice saying the prayer, "Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father...". He then shall give the cup to the bridegroom, who shall drink two-thirds of it. He shall also sign the brideman between the eyes. Then the Deacon shall take the cup to the bride, who shall drink what remains therein. He shall also sign the bridemaid between the eyes.

Then follows the blessing of the bridal attire. First, there is an oration with *psalm* 93. An anthem follows with another oration. Then comes the *qanona* with its own oration. There are two orations to follow that. Now the deacon shall take up the bridal attire and the priest shall say two prayers over it. At the end of each prayer he signs it in cross form. Then there follows the benediction of the crowns. At the end of the prayer, the priest again signs the bridal attire.

The bride is then adorned with this attire and is made to stand on the right side of the bridegroom. Coronation is to follow this rite. For that first there are two orations with *psalm* 123,1-4 and an anthem. During the first stanza of the anthem the crowns shall be placed on the heads of the bridegroom and the bride.

At the end of the anthem there comes an oration with *psalm* 128 together with its own special *qanona*. There follow then two orations and the special *karozutha* or proclamation prayer. At its end also there are two orations to follow the long blessing prayers over the bridegroom and the bride separately. Then follows the final sealing prayer and the sign of the cross over the assembly.

The third part of the marriage celebration is the setting up of the Bridal Chamber. It usually takes place in the evening before the bridegroom and the bride retire to rest for the night. This also begins with "Glory to God in the highest..." and Lord's prayer. An oration follows with *psalm* 121. Then comes an anthem with another oration. At the end of the anthem there is an oration with *psalm* 67 and a special *qanona*. Then there follows three orations with the final sealing prayer and a hymn.

A Look into the History

In the very early Syriac tradition, the fathers Aprem and Aphrahat speak about the bridegroom and the bride as symbolising the union between Christ and the Church[7]. The long prayers of blessing over the bridegroom and the bride in the order of solemnisation of matrimony in the East Syriac tradition are attributed to Mar Aprem[8]. In the 5th century Narsai affirmed about the necessity of a priest in all ecclesiastical marriages[9].

The synod of Mar George (676) made a distinction between the marriage according to the Christian law and according to the local customs. It prescribed certain conditions for a marriage. They are the consent of the

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[7] J. Vellian, "The Church as Bride in the East Syrian Tradition", *Diakonia* 33(1974)188-194

[8] G.P.Badger, *Nestorians and their Rituals II*, pp.267f.

[9] A. Mingana (ed.), *Narsai Doctoris Syri Homiliae et Carmina I*, Mossul 1905, p. 289

parents, the presence of the holy Cross of our salvation and the blessing of a priest[10].

Patriarch Timothy the Great (728-823) prescribed the presence of the priest and that of the Cross necessary for all ecclesiastical marriages[11]. Iso Bar Nun (823-828) speaks about the requisites of a marriage in detail. According to him there should be the presence of the priest, the laity, the Cross, the *hanana* and the rings for Christian marriage[12].

"In the period between ninth and twelfth century, there are testimonies to show that the blessing by the priest and the exchange of rings were important parts of marriage. The blessing by priest was considered a blessing by God, and hence if at all a priest was not available at the time of marriage, the custom insisted to get the blessing of the priest at the earliest"[13].

Marriage among the Chaldeans and Indians

There are some six steps discerned for a marriage among the East Syrians. They are:

Pact: The parents or the guardians of the future spouses, after having determined to conduct the marriage, express their decision before the priest. The priest asks them to join their hands and blesses them making the sign of the cross.

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[10] J. Chabot (ed.), *Synodicon Orientale*, Paris 1902, pp. 487-488; J. Vellian (ed.), *Crown, Veil, Cross...*, p. 8.
[11] Timothy, "Definitiones Canonicae" in E. Sachau, *Syriache Rechtsbuescher II*, Berlin 1908, p. 75.
[12] Timothy, "Definitiones Canonicae", p. 129.
[13] J. Vellian (ed.), *Crown, Veil, Cross...*, p. 8.

The Synod of Diamper (1599) and the Statutes of Mar Makil (1896-1914) mention about this practice of the Thomas Christians of India. It continues to be a practice among the Kinanite community of the Jacobites in India. Hence we can say that it was somehow practised among the Thomas Christians but dropped out due to the Latin influence. Today the presence and involvement of the priest is not considered necessary for this agreement.

Manifestation of the consent: There was a custom among the Chaldeans to send a woman with a ring to the house of the girl to obtain her consent. If she accepts the ring the consent is given. Then there was the custom of spouses expressing their consent separately before each one's parish priest.

There is no evidence for such practices among the Thomas Christians of India. Today there is the betrothal function before the parish priest of the girl with the consent of the boy's parish priest. It appears to have begun with the influence of the Latin tradition. In the context of a short liturgical rite, the boy and the girl express their consent for the future marriage and the priest gives them a blessing.

Espousal: According to the Chaldeans it was conducted in the house of the girl and was considered to be an indissoluble bond. It was always conducted by a priest in the presence of the holy Cross.

Mar Jacob in India wrote to the king of Portugal on December 16, 1530 that the people are used to marry at the door of the church. Hence we have to presume that it was the custom of the Thomas Christians in the 16th century. Today the custom is to conduct it inside the church.

Blessing of the Nuptial Insignia: For the Chaldeans there were the rings, bridal attire and the crowns. For the Thomas Christians of India there were the *thali*[14], *mandrakodi*[15] and the crowns. This blessing could take place either in the house or in the church. Ancient documents show that both the practices existed among the Thomas Christians of India. Now it is conducted as part of the espousal rituals in the church. The restored rituals given from Rome in 1963 permits it to be done also in the houses.

For the Chaldeans the important sign of the marriage is the ring. The Thomas Christians of India have substituted it with the *thali* and *mandrakodi*. Both these are the typical marriage signs among their Hindu brethren. The distinction is noted in the absence of the cross of beads on the *thali* of the Hindus. A married woman will never take the *thali* off her neck. When she dies it is either buried with her or deposited in the treasury of the church. Till the beginning of the twentieth century there was a custom of depositing the *thali* and *mandrakodi* in the Rectory of the church on the previous day of the marriage together with 21 *aini*[16]. One of these *ainis* was taken to give sweet to the spouses immediately after the marriage rites in the church. The rest of the *ainis* were distributed among the clergy in the church.

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[14] *Thali* is a heart shaped medal of gold with a cross of 21 beads on it. The boy ties it around the neck of the girl using the thread taken from the *manthrakodi* at the time of the marriage celebration.

[15] *Manthrakodi* is the typical bridal veil presented to the girl by the boy during the marriage celebration.

[16] *Aini* is a special kind of sweet prepared mostly during marriage celebrations.

The formula for blessing the crowns was dropped from the liturgical books by the influence of the Latin Bishops who ruled over the Thomas Christians after the 16th century. But they continued to use the crowns till recently.

Coronation: Coronation was considered to be the culmination of the sacramental ritual of marriage and it was always done in the church. It appears that the Latin Prelates removed also the ritual of coronation together with the blessing formula from the liturgical books of the Thomas Christians of India. Anyway, as it is already mentioned, the practice of using the crowns existed till recently. The restored text of the sacraments given from Rome in 1963 includes this crowning ceremony also. But some of the Bishops are not in favour of introducing it again.

Setting up of the Bridal Chamber: It is the function of conducting the bride to the house of the bridegroom and the social celebration called *Adachuthura*, namely, the shutting and opening of the bridal chamber. From ancient documents it appears that it was customary also among the Thomas Christians of India. Priests also used to participate in the celebrations and the banquet given in that connection. In the 19th century the priests were forbidden to participate in such celebrations and banquets. Although the Northist[17] community stopped such celebrations by the 20th century, the Southist[18] community still continues to hold it.

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[17] Northists are the members of the original Thomas Christians of India.
[18] Southists are the descendants of the migrated Kinanites from Persia.

Customs Connected with Marriage Celebration

The wedding ceremonies and customs show that it is a community celebration. It is considered not merely a contract between the boy and the girl. On the other hand it is taken to be a contract between two families and their relatives. Betrothal is the initial agreement and fixing of the marriage. Not only the boy and the girl but also their paternal uncles play an eminent role in this initial fixing function. Betrothal is called *kaipidutham* (clasping of hands) in the native tongue. It is indicative of the clasping of hands of the paternal uncles of both the parties. According to ancient custom, they used to clasp their hands before the priest either at home or in the church and get a blessing. They were in fact taking up the responsibility of conducting the marriage. It means not only the fathers but also the relatives are earnestly and wholeheartedly involved in the new relationship.

"Even until recently, the maternal uncles of the boy and the girl used to come together at the erection of the poles for the *pandal* (temporary hall) for the festivity of the wedding. The invited uncle was given water bowl (*kindy*) by the uncle of the other party for rinsing and hand washing. So also 'dowry' was handed over not to the boy or to the father of the boy, but to the paternal uncle of the boy by the paternal uncle of the girl. This is not done just as a business, but as a sacred action. Reverently, they kneel on a mat in front of a lighted lamp, representing Jesus Christ, and say prayers as

though in front of an altar. The elders thus are really involved in the initiation of the marriage contract"[19].

Antham or Chandam Charthal

Antham or Chandam Charthal is the beautifying of the boy. It consists in the official shaving of the boy and giving him a solemn oil bath. On the eve of the marriage day the boy is seated in the *pandal* in the presence of the assembled people and with their permission he is shaved by the village barber. The barber's asking of permission reminds all of the superiority of Christians over 17 castes of people. He has to ask it three times. The first two instances are ignored by the assembly and at the third, he is given the permission vocally. He then shaves the boy and takes him out to put oil on his head and gives him a bath. The assembly sings "ancient songs" related to the ceremony[20].

Mailanchi Ideel

It is the beautifying of the girl. *Mailanchi* is a special kind of herb. Its yellow ointment is a beautifying product. On the eve of the marriage day, the girl is brought to the *pandal* by her elder sister and is seated in front of her grandmother, who puts this special ointment on her palms and feet. "Though the main purpose of this function is to beautify the girl, the song which accompanies the ceremony gives a biblical meaning to it: Since Eve plucked the forbidden fruit with her hands, the palms are smeared. Since with her legs she approached the forbidden fruit to eat it, her

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[19] J. Vellian (ed.), *Crown, Veil, Cross,...*, p.33

[20] J.Vellian (ed.), *Crown, Veil, Cross...*, pp. 33-34

feet are smeared. So the ceremony reminds us of the first couple, their sin and the symbolical repairing of it"[21].

Sweet Giving Function

On the eve of the marriage day, the boy and the girl are solemnly given sweets in their own homes. Similarly after the marriage they are together given sweets in both their houses. For this sugar or *aini* is made use of. Now a days they use cakes also. The deputed persons according to the custom, asking the permission of the assembled, have to offer the sweets. Here too, they have to ask the permission three times. The first two are ignored and at the third, the permission is given. According to the Chaldeans, the boy and the girl have to share from the same cup during the marriage ceremony. It appears that the Thomas Christians of India have substituted it with this sweet giving function. Formerly it was also done in the church immediately after the marriage rite.

Greeting the Parents and Elders

Both the boy and the girl, before they proceed to the church for marriage, greet their parents and elders and get their blessing. It reminds the scene of Rebecca receiving blessing before starting to meet her proposed husband (Gen 24, 60).

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[21] J.Vellian (ed.), *Crown, Veil, Cross...*, p. 35

Procession back Home from the Church

The Thomas Christians made use of most of the privileges once granted to them by the king during this procession. They used the *panchavadyam* (five kinds of special musical instruments), *muttukuda* (special kind of silken umbrellas), various types of cheering like *kurava* and *nadavili*, and so on. According to the ancient songs, the bride and the groom rode on an elephant, then they were carried in arms by their respective maternal uncles. During the procession the cheering "*nadanada*" resounded. Such type of cheering was common on the occasion of royal processions. Here it proclaimed the approaching of the new couple[22].

Welcome by the Mother of the Bridegroom

At the entrance of the marriage *pandal*, erected in front of the house, the mother of the bridegroom solemnly welcomes the newly wedded. The sister of the bridegroom holds a *kolvilakku* (a special kind of lighted brass lamp) in one hand and a bowl in the other. The bowl contains water, paddy and palm leaf pieces (The palm leaf is the one blessed on Ossana Sunday). The whole thing is symbolic of purification and fertility. The mother traces sign of the Cross three times on the forehead of the bridegroom and the bride with a piece of palm leaf in the bowl. Then the couple are solemnly invited to the house. Placing first the right leg forward, they enter the house.

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[22] J.Vellian (ed.), *Crown, Veil, Cross...*, p. 36

Blessing by the Mother of the Bride

In the *pandal* the mother of the bride gives a blessing to the newly wedded, of course, after obtaining permission from the assembled in the customary manner. She stands in front of the couple seated and crosses her hands in such a way that the right hand comes over the head of the groom and the left hand over that of the bride. At this time the ladies sing a blessing song which means: "I give my benediction to you, so that you, your husband and your children may live long life"[23]. The mother of the bride and the ladies are then given presents.

Present Day Marriage Celebration

Now a days the marriage is celebrated among the Chaldeo-Indians in two stages: the betrothal and the marriage. Both are conducted in the church in the presence of priests. The settlement of the marriage and the decision about the dowry take place beforehand.

> Can. 783 # 1 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches reminds the pastors of souls about their obligation to take care of the faithful who are preparing for the matrimonial state, so that they may get to know and be informed about the meaning of Christian Marriage, about its characteristics of union and indissolubility in the image of the indefectible union of Christ with the Church and about its duties

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[23] J.Vellian (ed.), *Crown, Veil, Cross...*, p. 37

of union between them and toward their offspring (can. 776 ## 1 and 2).

Can. 784 refers to the particular law of the Churches *sui juris* for the rules for the examination of the parties and the inquiries concerning their Baptism and freedom to marry. It should be noted that, differing from the Latin Code (can. 1065), the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches uses only the term Baptism and does not allude to Chrismation with holy *Myron*. As previously mentioned, Chrismation with holy *Myron* must be administered in conjunction with Baptism in the Eastern traditions[24].

Betrothal

On a fixed day, the boy and the girl express their consent for their future marriage, usually before the parish priest of the girl, with the knowledge of the boy's parish priest during a short liturgical rite[25]. The liturgical rite begins with 'Glory to God in the highest' proclaimed thrice and with the Lord's prayer. Then follows a priestly oration. After that the priest proclaims the reading from 1 *Peter* 3: 1-9. If it is fitting he may give a short homily. After the homily, the priest asks the boy and the girl to express their consent for the future marriage and they do it publicly. Now the priest blesses them saying: "God, the heavenly court, and all of us who stand here are witnesses to your promise. May Jesus Christ bless you and enable you to carry out your promise". Then follows the *Karozutha*, the proclamation prayer, the

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[24] *Instruction*, n. 80

[25] Cf. V. Pathikulangara (Compiled and edited), *Blessings and Prayers (Sacramentals)*, Kottayam 1990, pp. 103-109.

concluding prayers and the final blessing on the community. The Church as the bride of Jesus, the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca and that of the ancient fathers are all remembered in the concluding prayers.

Betrothal usually takes place three weeks before the marriage. The news of the proposed marriage is then published in respective parish churches of the boy and the girl on three Sundays after the Eucharistic celebration.

> Can. 782 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches addresses the Engagements which precede Marriage, affirming that they are governed by the particular law (# 1). The canon specifies that action to seek the celebration of Marriage does not arise from the promise of Marriage. In the practice existing for centuries – and still used in many Churches – the Engagement, often called the "rite of the rings", is usually celebrated together with the matrimonial rite itself, called the "rite of the crowns".
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> The specific meaning of the rite of engagement is to express the consent of the future spouses, while that of the crowns has more directly the scope of introducing them into the fullness of matrimonial life. The rite of Engagement does not consist of simple promises but rather of a definitive pledge. Therefore, it is not appropriate for the Engagements to be celebrated superficially or at the beginning of plans for matrimony. Specific liturgical rites for the first steps of realising these projects – less solemn and less definitive – exist in various Churches and are a part of the tradition, currently not practised, of others. A better understanding and eventual restoration of these

rites could contribute to the sanctification of the different moments in the journey of Christian couples up through its full completion[26].

Marriage

The marriage ritual is on its way of preparation in the Chaldeo-Indian Church. The draft text published by the Bishops' Synod[27] is considered in the present context.

On the determined day the boy and the girl together with their relatives and friends enter the church through the main door and approach the *bema* in the middle of the church. The priest and the helpers vested in their own liturgical garments come in procession to the *bema*. An opening hymn to the occasion may be sung during this procession. They place the *Thali, Mandrakodi*, rings, rosaries, floral garlands and so on, on a table near the *bema*.

The celebrant begins the liturgy as usual with the angels' hymn: "Glory to God in the highest" and the Lord's prayer: "Our Father in heaven...". Then follows a priestly oration in which the heavenly gifts are implored upon the spouses to lead an exemplary family life. It is concluded with a request to celebrate the sacrament worthily. Then they sing or recite *psalms* 45:10-16 and 128:3-5 with a special *qanona*: Rejoice O Church, the spouse of our Saviour, God eternal has chosen you as His spouse by love". Here the deacons bring censer and frankincense, and the celebrant puts incense in the censer with usual prayer and blesses it. Then there follows an oration, which is exactly the same as in the

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[26] *Instruction*, n. 85

[27] *Synodal News* 3(May 1994)35-51.

order of the Holy *Qurbana*. Now the celebrant lights the special lamp prepared with the words: "May Jesus who said: 'I am the light of the world, he who follows me will not walk in darkness' be the torch on our path". Then the veil of the sanctuary is removed and the deacon enters the sanctuary and incenses in the usual way.

During the incensing, they sing the Resurrection hymn and the *Trisagion* together with their orations exactly as in the *Qurbana* text. Then follow the OT readings. For the first reading *Genesis* 1:26-28 or 2:18-24 and for the second reading *Isaiah* 61:10-11 or *Proverbs* 31:10-31 or *Sirah* 26:1-4+13-17 are given. After the OT readings there comes the *Surraya*, the Responsorial hymn, for which they sing *psalm* 128:3-6. Now the celebrant proclaims the oration before the NT readings. Then comes the Epistle reading for which the *Ephesians* 5:20-33 or 1 *Peter* 3:1-7 are given. After the Epistle they sing *psalm* 45:2-4+9-11 as *Zummara*, the *Halleluiah* hymn before the Gospel reading. Exactly as in the text of the *Qurbana*, during the *Zummara* the celebrant and deacons go in procession to the altar and bring the Gospel Lectionary down to the *bema*. Three options are given for the Gospel reading. They are *John* 2:1-11, *Matthew* 19:3-6 and *Mark* 10:2-9. After reading or chanting of the Gospel, the celebrant closes the lectionary, kisses over it and entrusts it with the deacon who carries it back to the altar. The sanctuary veil is closed and follow the homily and *Karozutha*, the proclamation prayer. In the *Karozutha* there are the general petitions and special petitions for the spouses. The *Karozutha* is concluded with the following prayer of the celebrant: "O God Lord, bless this couple to lead with success the family life which they begin with joy and hope. Fill them with your peace and calmness. Make them worthy to obtain the everlasting crown. Bless graciously their

parents and other members of the family who made them grow in your love. Bless us who participate in this holy ceremony. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Lord of all, for ever".

The deacon then announces the central part of the sacramental celebration. The celebrant first makes a prayer for himself to administer worthily this sacrament. Then a hymn, in which the intimate relation between Church and her bridegroom Jesus is extolled, is sung.

Next comes the marriage contract. The celebrant asks the bridegroom and the bride about their consent for the marriage and they express explicitly their consent before the assembled. Then as a symbol of their marriage contract they are asked to hold their right hands together. While they do so, the celebrant blesses them saying: "May God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob be with you. May Jesus Christ our Lord unite you with the bond of marriage in order to lead a family life with love and with the unity of mind. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, for ever". The celebrant sprinkles holy water in cross form over their hands.

Now follows the rite of blessing the *Thali* and the *Mandrakodi*. The blessing formula of the *thali* is as follows: "O Lord, who has accepted the Church as your bride through your death on the cross, bless this *Thali* which unites the bride and the bridegroom in faith and love. May this *Thali* which is a symbol of unity, unite them in unbreakable love and total faithfulness. May this cross give them strength to suffer gladly the difficulties that may arise in the life and to lead a holy life according to your will. Let it be a symbol of

faithfulness and let them be rejoicing in you". The celebrant sprinkles holy water over the *thali.*

The blessing formula of the *mandrakodi* runs like this: "O merciful Lord, who adorns the human soul with the eternal robe of grace, bless this *Mandrakodi.* Bless this couple to put you on in total self-offering and mutual love. And may they live a life of purity on earth and may they wear the robe of glory in heaven". The celebrant sprinkles holy water over the *Mandrakodi.*

After the blessing, the celebrant first takes the *thali* and gives it to the bridegroom who ties it around the neck of the bride. If there are rings, they are given to the bride and the bridegroom and they put them on mutually on their fingers. If there are rosaries, the celebrant gives them to the spouses. If there are garlands of flowers, they are given to the bride and the bridegroom and they put them on mutually. Then the celebrant gives the *mandrakodi* to the bridegroom who puts it over the head of the bride, or places it on the hands of the bride. The community may sing a fitting hymn while these actions take place.

Then the celebrant extends the Holy Bible to the spouses and they touching on it with their right hand proclaim the following words of oath: "We do swear, making the Bible the witness, that, from today onwards until our death, we will live together with one mind as husband and wife in mutual love and faithfulness – in joy and sorrow, in prosperity and poverty, in health and ill-health. May God Almighty help us to live according to this oath".

Now the deacon requests the couple to bow down their heads for receiving the blessing. The celebrant

extending and imposing his right hand over their heads says the following prayer: "May God Almighty bless you. May He enrich you with internal beauty and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. May Christ, the head of the Church, always be your ruler and protector. May He support you in all your activities of life. May He shower mental and bodily health and earthly blessings upon you. May He help you to accept gladly the children whom He gives to you, and to lead them in the path of sanctity. And may He make you worthy of offering to Himself, praise, thanksgiving and adoration".

Then there follow two orations of seeking help, protection and assistance from God Almighty, Christ our Lord, Virgin Mary and other saints. Finally there comes the *huttamma*, the sealing prayer. At its end the celebrant blesses the assembly and sprinkles holy water on the spouses. The spouses are then invited to the sacristy or rectory where they sign their contract before the priest.

Canon Law on Marriage Celebration

The *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* gives various directions for marriage celebration in its cann. 776-866. The *Instruction* of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches (January 6, 1996) *for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* summarises the canonical regulations and gives the essential points to be noted in the celebration of the marriage. We have already mentioned some of them during our discussion. Here we give a few other important directions.

The Consent and Form of the Marriage

The free consent of the parties is essential for a valid marriage. Similarly, it is to be celebrated in a sacred rite.

> An indispensable element for constituting a Marriage is the consent with which a man and a woman mutually give and receive each other (can. 817). The internal consent of the mind is presumed to be in agreement with the words or signs employed in celebrating the Matrimony (can. 824 # 1).
>
> Only those Marriages are valid which are celebrated with the sacred rite, with the presence and blessing of the local Hierarch or the local parish priest or a priest to whom the faculty of blessing the Marriage has been given by either of them (can. 828 ## 1 and 2). The Marriage can be validly and licitly celebrated in the presence of witnesses alone when a priest who is competent according to the norm of the law cannot be present or accessed without grave inconvenience, or in danger of death, or if it is prudently foreseen that such circumstances will continue for at least a month. As much as possible in such cases, another priest, even non-Catholic, is to be called to bless the Marriage (can. 832 ## 1 and 2)[28].

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[28] *Instruction*, n. 81

The Obligation of a Sacred Rite

In Eastern Churches the minister of the marriage celebration is the officiating priest. His blessing is essential for the completion of the celebration.

> It should be noted that the obligation of a sacred rite, and thus of the priestly blessing, for the validity of the Marriage is specific to Eastern law. In the Latin Church, simply the presence of the local Ordinary, or the parish priest, or a priest or deacon delegated by either of them is required. In the Eastern tradition, the priest, in addition to assisting, must bless the Marriage. To bless means to act as the true minister of the sacrament, in virtue of his priestly power to sanctify, so that the spouses may be united by God in the image of the flawless nuptial union of Christ with the Church and be consecrated to each other by sacramental grace.
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> Can. 832 # 3 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches also specifies that, if for extraordinary circumstances, Marriage is celebrated only in the presence of witnesses, the spouses must receive the blessing of the Marriage from the priest as soon as possible[29].

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[29] *Instruction*, n. 82

Competency for Blessing the Marriage

The local Hierarch and the local parish priest are the official persons to bless a marriage.

> As for the competency of blessing the Marriage, both the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches and the Code of Canon Law prescribe norms of the same tone: the Hierarch or the local parish priest may "validly bless the marriage of parties anywhere within the boundaries of their territory, whether they are subjects or non-subjects, provided that at least one of the parties is enrolled in his Church *sui juris*.
>
> As for the delegation to bless a Marriage, can. 830 # 1 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches establishes that the local Hierarch and parish priest "can give the faculty to bless a determined marriage within their own territorial boundaries to priests of any Church *sui juris*, even the Latin Church". The local Ordinary or parish priest of the Latin rite can also delegate to Eastern priests the faculty to assist and bless the Marriage of Latin faithful.
>
> It is always necessary to take into account that, with the exception of the case in which the Hierarch or the parish priest are of another Church *sui juris*, with respect to the norm of can. 916 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, the celebration must occur, *ad liceitatem*, according to the rites of the spouses, or of one of them if it is an inter-ritual marriage. Therefore, a celebration in another rite is illicit, but

can be authorized by the Apostolic See on a case by case basis.

Can. 831 # 2 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches specifies that the Marriage must be celebrated in the presence of the parish priest of the groom, unless the particular law determines otherwise or unless excused by a just cause.

In the case of mixed Marriages between Eastern Catholics and Orthodox, the obligation to observe the form, that is, the norm of celebrating the Marriage in the presence of the local Hierarch or local parish priest or one delegated by them, is required only for liceity. For their validity, however, only the blessing of a priest is required[30].

The Prescriptions of the Liturgical Books are to be Observed

"Outside the case of necessity, in the celebration of marriage the prescriptions of the liturgical books and the legitimate customs are to be observed in the celebration of marriage" (can. 836). In reviewing and eventually updating the liturgical prescriptions of these celebrations, the competent authorities of each Church *sui juris* are to carefully safeguard the specific features of their own heritage which show the particular prominence of the meaning of the matrimonial institution in the framework of the history of salvation and, especially, express in

[30] *Instruction*, n. 83

theological terms the strict relation between it and the nuptial mystery existing between Christ and his Church[31].

[31] *Instruction*, n. 84

Chapter 7

THE LESSER MYSTERIES OR SACRAMENTALS

Berakah – Burktha – Eulogia - Blessing[1]

In the Semitic world, a blessing is a very powerful action. It is both a gift from God and a praise of God. It is a good word that is addressed to God on behalf of human beings and at the same time to human beings on behalf of God. To bless is to praise, to give account to, to pay homage to, to adore, to implore, to give thanks to, to consecrate, to invoke God's favour on, and so on. While the blessing of God descends on human beings, it also extends to the other works of his hand, as it does to the whole of nature, which is at his service: "Blessed be you, Lord" (*Dan* 3: 52-56); "May the Lord bless you" (*Ps* 134: 3). It is a divine blessing that human beings are able to bless their creator: "May those whom God has blessed, bless his most holy Name" (*Tob* 13: 18). This twofold movement proper to blessing fills the liturgy. Benediction-as-praise finds its central expression in the Eucharist and the Divine Praises. The blessing that descends on persons and things includes both everyday life and the annual cycle, and leaves its mark on the great stages of Christian life. All through one's life a Christian receives these blessings of God[2].

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[1] The word *burktha* (Syriac) or *eulogia* (Greek) means the same as *berakah* (Hebrew), namely, blessing.

[2] Cf. P. Jounel, "Blessings", pp. 263-264; V. Pathikulangara, *Qurbana*. Kottayam 1998, p. 12

The Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is filled with various kinds of blessings. In the Old Testament we know about the blessings given by patriarchs, parents and kings. Priests also give blessings during worship. The Eighteen Benedictions of the Jewish tradition are well known. In worship it turns out to formulas of praise, glorification and thanksgiving. In the New Testament we come across blessings given by Jesus Christ and his Apostles (*Mk* 10: 16; *Lk* 24: 50. 53).

In the course of time, besides the Eucharist and the other Sacraments (Greater Mysteries), there developed several kinds of blessings in various ecclesial traditions. They began to call them Sacramentals or Lesser Mysteries. "The western liturgy of our day includes over two hundred blessings of persons and things. Not only would later Christians multiply blessings, but from the Middle Ages on they would believe that nothing is to be used for the glory of God and the service of human beings unless it has first been blessed. The prayer of praise or invocation, together with its accompanying gesture, paid homage to the sovereign lordship of the Creator and of him whom the creator has established as king of the universe"[3].

Sacramentals or Lesser Mysteries

According to Can. 867 # 1 of the Code of Canons of Eastern Churches, "the sacramentals are sacred signs, by which in imitation of the sacraments, effects especially spiritual ones, are signified and obtained through the intercession of the Church, people are disposed to receive the

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[3] P. Jounel, "Blessings", p. 268

principal effect of the sacraments and the various circumstances of life are sanctified".

Can. 1166 of the Code of Canon Law defines sacramentals as following: "Sacramentals are sacred signs which in a sense imitate the sacraments. They signify certain effects, especially spiritual ones, and they achieve these effects through the intercession of the Church".

The definitions in the Canon Law are almost the same as in Vatican II. The sacramentals there "are sacred signs which bear a resemblance to the sacraments. They signify effects, particularly of a spiritual nature, which are obtained through the Church's intercession. By them men are disposed to receive the chief effect of the sacraments, and various occasions in life are rendered holy" (SC 60).

One thing is very clear in the teachings of second Vatican Council and that of the Canon Law. The sacraments and sacramentals, namely, the Mysteries according to Eastern traditions, are the ecclesial celebrations of faith during the important moments of Christian life. If the Sacraments (Greater Mysteries) are the celebrations of faith during the decisive or critical moments of life, the Sacramentals (Lesser Mysteries) are celebrations of faith during the other important moments of life. Vatican II has tried somehow to fuse them, the sacraments and sacramentals, together in the line of Eastern traditions (Cf. SC 61). It is good to remember here that the Eastern Churches are not very happy with the clear-cut distinction made between the sacraments and sacramentals by the Western Church, although all Catholic Eastern Churches accept the Western distinction.

Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus

Apostolic Tradition appears to be the first collection of some sacramentals. There we come across the blessings over the oil for the sick, cheese and olives. The blessings are proclaimed after the Eucharistic prayer. In connection with baptism, besides the prayer over water and oil which are used for immersion and anointing, there is also a blessing of the oil of exorcism and one over the mixed milk and honey and another one over a cup of water. The oil of exorcism is used in the rite of exorcism, while the mixture of milk and honey together with water is given to the neophytes along with the Eucharistic Bread and Wine. In the context of the community's evening meal, it speaks about the bishop's prayer of thanksgiving over the lamp; the bread the bishop gives in this connection is also specially blessed. There is also a mention about the blessing of the fruits of the soil. It really distinguishes between the fruits which can be blessed and which cannot. "In the prayers of blessing, intercession plays a part but thanksgiving predominates". It is even prescribed that the following words are to be used in all blessings: 'Glory to you, Father and Son with the Holy Spirit in the holy Church, now and always and through endless ages. Amen'[4].

"The structure of prayers that is thus established to embrace the whole of life is not thought of as something added to the sacraments, because the entire celebration is regarded as sacramental. The practices mentioned, and even the formulas to be used with them, have Jewish antecedents, but there is also a lively awareness that Christian worship has an eschatological dimension. Thus the milk and honey that

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[4] Cf. P. Jounel, "Blessings", pp. 268-269

are blessed for the newly baptised do not simply symbolise the entrance of these new Christians into the true promised Land; they also serve the same function, but by antithesis, as the bitter herbs that recalled the Exodus from Egypt in the Jewish Passover ritual. Again, while Christian prayers of blessing rise up, as does Jewish prayer, to the Almighty One, their decidedly Trinitarian character underscores their essential newness"[5].

Apostolic Constitutions

The Syrian *Apostolic Constitutions* also contains, besides the prayers and blessings over the *myron*, the oil of anointing and the baptismal water, blessings over ordinary water, oil of exorcism and first fruits. It speaks also about Christians using the blessings of Aaron. The element of thanksgiving is the predominant sentiment in the blessing formulas. The *Apostolic Constitutions* clearly reserves this function of blessing to bishops and priests: "After the deacon has asked them to bow their heads, the bishop stretches his hands out over them while saying the prayer of blessing"[6].

Euchologion of Serapion

"The *Euchologion* of Serapion shows that the blessing was given in the same way in Egypt (chapter 4). More importantly, it provides many prayers for blessing catechumens (chapters 3-4), the people (5), lay persons (6), the sick (7-8), the land that it may be fruitful (9), offerings of oil and water (17-18), baptismal water and chrism (19, 25), and the oil, bread or water given to the sick (29). To be noted

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[5] P. Jounel, "Blessings", p. 269
[6] P. Jounel, "Blessings", p. 269

is the importance assigned to the blessing of water in Egypt"[7].

Western Sacramentaries

The ancient sacramentaries such as the Leonine, Gelasian, Gregorian and others give several blessing formulas. There we come across blessings for the oil of the sick, milk and honey given to the newly baptised, the first new beans on the feast of Ascension, the first new grapes on St Sixtus' day (August 6), Easter lamb and Easter eggs, various food materials, Easter candle, water to be used for sprinkling homes, water and salt to be used in exorcisms against lightning, a new threshing floor, new fruits, apples, trees, for doorkeepers, lectors, exorcists, acolytes and subdeacons, for cloistered areas of monasteries, and so on. There is also a blessing given during the consecration of virgins.

In the prayer formulas the element of invocation clearly takes priority over thanksgiving. Most blessings are satisfied to invoke God's protection on an individual or a specific group of persons or things or places. In some cases of blessings, exorcisms occupied a disproportionate place. There was also the custom in some areas of priests turning westward to expel the demon and then eastward to invoke the Lord[8].

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[7] P. Jounel, "Blessings", p. 269
[8] Cf. P. Jounel, "Blessings", pp. 269-271

Eastern *Euchologions*

Parallel to the western tradition, in the East also there developed several kinds of blessings and rituals. They prefer to call them Lesser Mysteries because in conception they are similar to the Greater Mysteries, the seven Sacraments. There one comes across blessings for sowing, first fruits of the harvest, planting of vines, vintage, new wine, boats, fishing nets, and so on. There also developed some blessings in connection with domestic life: blessings for betrothals, pregnant women, women who have just given birth to a child, a newly adopted child, and so on. In the East there developed also a very solemn blessing of water on Epiphany, the day when the baptism of our Lord is celebrated[9].

Various Kinds of Sacramentals or Lesser Mysteries

There are several kinds of Sacramentals or Lesser Mysteries that are celebrated in various Churches.

1. Persons are set apart for the service of God through a constitutive blessing: e.g. Men and women religious, clerics of different grades, namely, exorcists, lectors, acolytes, subdeacons, etc., *Rambans*, Abbots, Archdeacon, Patriarchal Archdeacon, Archbishops, Patriarchs, Pope, and so on.
2. Places and things are set apart for the service of God through a constitutive blessing: e.g. Churches, Chapels, Altars, Patens, Chalices,

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[9] Cf. P. Jounel, "Blessings", pp. 271-272

Crosses, Medals, Rosaries, Scapulars, Icons, Images, Statues, etc.

3. An invocation of God's blessing on persons, animals, things and places: e.g. On people like children, the old, the sick, and the dying, on fields, tools, animals, vehicles, articles for use, house for dwelling, educational institutions, factories, shops, hospitals, orphanages, and so on.
4. An invocation of God's favour for driving away the evil spirit, calamities, epidemics, etc.: e.g. Exorcisms, prayer and blessing to ward off harmful animals, birds, insects, and so on.
5. Feasts and Celebrations in the Liturgical Cycle: e.g. Flag hoisting, processions, special rites for each feast, pilgrimages, etc.
6. Veneration (adoration?) of the Cross and *Evangalion*: The Cross as the symbol of the risen Lord and the *Evangalion*, the "Gospel Lectionary", the symbol of the living Word are most precious treasures of the St Thomas Christians of India. Most of the historians, foreign travellers, and European missionaries have described the St Thomas Christians of India as a community showing exceptional veneration to the Holy Cross and the *Evangalion*, the Gospel Lectionary[10]. They had their own version of the Cross, the St Thomas Cross[11] and of the Bible, the *Pschitta*. They used to adorn the Cross and the *Evangalion* with precious metals like gold, silver, and so on, since they were considered the symbols of Christ's victory and naturally of their own

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[10] Cf. Vincenzo Maria, *Viaggio all'Indie Orientale*, Roma 1672, ch. 4
[11] Cf. V. Pathikulangara, *Qurbana*, pp. 55-58

victory[12]. It is already mentioned that the early East Syriac or Chaldeo-Indian tradition considers the Cross as one among the Greater Mysteries or the seven Sacraments[13]. The St Thomas Cross and the *Evangalion*, the most precious treasures of the St Thomas Christians of India were usually kept on the altar itself; and when they are taken out of the sanctuary for procession, the faithful used to kiss them with great devotion.

7. Fasting is a devotional activity and a sacramental or lesser mystery according to oriental traditions. Fasting is marked by special liturgical and private prayers in the church or at home, renunciation of something or some act most dear to and almsgiving, that is, giving away something for the benefit of others. According to the liturgical cycle itself the Chaldeo-Indians observe several fastings:
   - *Twenty-five day fasting* in preparation for the Nativity of Jesus Christ
   - *Fifty day fasting* in preparation for the Resurrection of our Lord
   - *Eight day fasting* in preparation for the Nativity of our Lady
   - *Fifteen day fasting* in preparation for the Assumption of our Lady
   - *Three day fasting* observed eighteen days before commencing the fifty day fasting in remembrance of God's special protection
   - *Friday fasting* in remembrance of our Lord's death on the Cross and the life of the Church

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[12] Cf. Vincenzo Maria, *Viaggio all'Indie Orientale*, ch. 4
[13] Cf. G. P. Badger, *Nestorians and their Rituals*, PP. 150-151

- *Wednesday fasting* in honour of our Lady.

Ministers of Sacramentals or Lesser Mysteries

The ordinary ministers of the sacramentals are the bishops and priests. Some sacramentals are by nature reserved to the bishops. For example, the ordinations of lectors, subdeacons, archdeacons, etc., the consecration of churches, chapels, altars, etc., blessing of paten, chalice and so on.

The deacons are usually not permitted to give any blessing. Hence they cannot be ordinarily the ministers of sacramentals. But in exceptional cases they are permitted to be the ministers[14]. According to Vatican II, even lay persons be permitted to be the ministers of certain sacramentals: "Provision should be made for the administration of some sacramentals, at least in special circumstances and at the discretion of the ordinary, by qualified lay persons"(SC 79).

The Chaldeo-Indian Church

The Thomas Christians of India also developed all kinds of blessings according to the need and circumstances. During the Portuguese period (16th to 20th century), they took over several sacramentals and their rituals also from the Roman or Latin tradition. The same situation continued during the indigenous period in the 20th century up to the restoration of their Eucharistic text in 1962. Afterwards they translated some of the sacramentals, which they were

[14] Cf. Can. 1169 # 3 of the Code of Canon Law. For the Orientals it depends on the Particular Law of each Church *sui juris*.

celebrating at that time, from Syriac to Malayalam and began to use them. But no official ritual book for the sacramentals is yet published. In 1987, the Denha Services[15] published a ritual book of a few sacramentals in Malayalam[16]. Its English translation with a few more additions was published in 1990 under the title, *Blessings and Prayers* (Sacramentals). These ritual books contain eighteen blessings, rites for the sick and dying, and prayers for thirteen special occasions, all according to the genius of Chaldeo-Indian or East Syriac tradition.

The blessings are for houses (one solemn and two ordinary forms) and other institutions. Among the institutions, there are educational institutions, hospitals, orphanages, home for the destitute, shops, hotels, press, medical shops, factories, workshops, and for any other institution that is not clearly mentioned. Then there is the blessing of the foundation stone for churches, chapels, shrines, houses, buildings and so on. There are also blessings on domestic animals, fruits, foods around Easter time, Holy Water, Cross, icons, images, medals, rosaries, scapulars, etc. Blessings are given also for vehicles on land, in water and in the air, for fishing net, for children and mother with child coming to the church first time after delivery. There are also sacramentals for warding off pests, snakes, rats, locusts, etc. and to ward off the evil spirit. A special sacramental is provided to use for any other special occasion. A betrothal or engagement blessing ritual is also incorporated.

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[15] Denha Services Publications, Vidyanagar, Kottayam 686018, Kerala, India, 1984ff.

[16] V. Pathikulangara (comp.& ed.), *Aasirvadaprarthdanakal* (Sacramentals), Kottayam 1987

Among the rites for the sick, there is a blessing formula for the children and another for the adult. Then there is the rite of giving Holy Communion to the sick. There are also prayers to be used when death is imminent and after death.

In all the sacramentals emphasis is laid upon the celebration of the Word and the blessing or invocation formula.

The Denha Services has also published separate booklets in Malayalam, one for *Benediction and Adoration* (1984), another for *Blessing the Residences of Priests and Religious* (1984), a third for *Honouring Blessed Chavara and Alphonsa* (1986) and another for the *Vestition and Profession of Religious Women* (1987). Liturgical rites for commencing the Great Fast and for the Passion Week and Easter are published both in Malayalam and in English by the Denha Services Publications.

In the case of all these sacramentals the compilers have tried their best to look into the sources, consider the modern circumstances and keep up the genius of the authentic liturgical tradition.

DENHA SERVICES
PUBLICATIONS

DENHA SERVICES PUBLICATIONS

1. VADAKETH Q.E., *Vyakthisaphalyam* ("A Study in Oriental Spirituality" in Malayalam) 1984; 1/8 crown; pages 216; price Rs.14.00 ($ 2.80) (Out of print)

2. PATHIKULANGARA V., *Church and Celebration*, "The Interiror of a Church or a Chapel in the Chaldeo-Indian Tradition", 1984;second printing 1986 1/8 demy; pages 98; price Rs. 12.00 ($ 2.40)

3. PATHIKULANGARA V. (comp. & ed.), *Benediction and Adoration*, in Malayalam and according to the Chaldeo-Indian liturgical genius, 1984; 1/8 crown; pages 24; price Rs.1.50 (out of print)

4. VELLILAMTHADAM T., *African Payal*, "Towards a Mental Breakthrough in the Latin Connection of Indian Catholicism", 1984; 1/8 demy; pages 40; price Rs. 7.00 ($ 1.40) (out of print)

5. PATHIKULANGARA V. (comp. & ed.), *Order for Blessing Residences of Priests and Religious*, in Malayalm and according the Chaldeo-Indian liturgical genius, 1984; 1/8 crown; pages 32; price Rs.2.00 ($ 0.40)

6. VELLILAMTHADAM T., *Countdown to 1999*, "400 years of Agony and Action since 1599", 1985; 1/8 demy; pages 32; price Rs.7.00 ($1.40) (out of print)

7. PATHIKULANGARA V., *"Further Documentation on Latin-Oriental Relations and the Mission of the Church in India"?,* 1985; 1/8 demy; pages 40; price Rs.5.00 ($ 1.00)

8. CHATHAMPARAMPIL T., *Sabhavijnaniyathinu Oru Mukavura* ("An Introduction to Ecclesiolgy", in Malayalam) 1985; 1/8 crown; pages 70; price Rs. 5.00 ($ 1.00)

9. PODIPARA Placid J., *The Latin Rite Christians of Malabar* (A fully documented monograph on the origin and history of the Latin Rite Christians in India by the greatest Indian Ecclesiastical Luminary of the 20th century; a posthumous publcation) 1986; 1/8 demy; pages 144; price Rs.20.00 ($ 4.00)

10. PATHIKULANGARA V., *Church in India*, 1986; 1/8 demy; pages 84; price Rs.12.00 ($ 2.40)

11. PATHIKULANGARA V., *Nammude Qurbana* (A catechetical explanation of the Chaldeo-Indian Eucharistic Celebration, in Malayalam); June 1986; 2nd printing in August 1986; 3rd printing in January 1989; 4th printing in January 1992; 1/8 crown; pages 218; price Rs.20.00 ($ 4.00)

12. VELLILAMTHADAM T., *Trojan Horse*, "The Unchristian Role of the Latin Church", 1986; 1/8 demy; pages 56; price Rs. 10.00 ($ 2.00) (out of print)

13. VADAKETH Q.E.(comp.& ed.), *Divya Karunya Aradhana* (Adoration of the Bl.Sacrament according to the Chaldeo-Indian Liturgical genius in Malyalam) 1987; 1/8 crown; pages 185; price 12.00 (Out of print)

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